



Thea Stilton

THE
CLOUD
CASTLE



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Geronimo Stilton

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THE CLOUD CASTLE



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Thea Stilton and the Thea Sisters



The Land of Clouds

High up, suspended in the clouds, there is an enchanted fantasy world where everything is light and colorful. It is the Land of Clouds, where beautiful fairies and mythical creatures live, ruled by Queen Nephele.



Queen Nephele lives in the Cloud Castle and rules over the Land of Clouds with great wisdom. Her subjects love her for this, and for her kindness.

Galatea is a member of the Grand Council of Fairies and is best friends with Ariette.



Ariette is one of the Weaver Fairies, who weave the strands that make up the clouds. She also knows how to read the dreams of other fairies while they sleep!

The Hundred-Handed Giant was cursed by a spell and must always keep his hundred hands busy.



The Color Pixies love to play tricks. They live in Fairywing Village and are also great cooks!



Airavata is an elephant with seven trunks who guards the passage into the Land of Clouds.

The Wind Elves are as light as feathers. They blow the winds that move the clouds in the sky, and they live in the Windy Cave.



Sleep Fairies are sweet, kind creatures who watch over sleep in the Land of Clouds. They live in Sleep Flower Woods.

King Nebus rules the Kingdom of Nimbus and is a just and courageous leader. He is secretly in love with Queen Nephele.



The Scarlet Lightning Fairies live in the Valley of Infinite Storm Clouds and have the most explosive personalities in the Land of Clouds!



SUMMER IS HERE!

SUMMER was in the air at Mouseford Academy. The students chattered excitedly in the hallways, **happy** that it was almost time for vacation. The Thea Sisters walked out into the school courtyard after their last **MARINE BIOLOGY** class.

“I really liked learning about **tropical** fish,” Violet was saying. “I would love to paint pictures of them during our break.”

Colette got a dreamy look in her eyes. “I would love to design a dress the color of a **BLUE STARFISH**.”

“Well, I’m thinking of doing some **ocean diving** around here,” Nicky said.

“That’s because you can’t sit still,” Pam teased. “Me, I think I’ll try to invent a new



recipe for some **SEAFOOD PIZZA.**"

Paulina's long black braid swung behind her as she turned to look at Nicky. "I think diving sounds like fun, too. There are some old **shipwreck** sites out there," she said. "I've been researching the history of them. Some of them are —"

Before she could finish her sentence, someone tapped her on the shoulder. It was me, **THEA STILTON!**

"Hi, Thea!" my friends greeted me, **surprised**. I hadn't told them I was coming, and I wasn't **teaching** there that semester.

"What are you doing here?" Pam asked.

"I have something to tell you," I said. "Can you follow me into my office?"

"**What's going on, Thea?**" Paulina asked eagerly when we were all settled.



"I was thinking of organizing a class in **fantasy languages** for you, with Will Mystery from the Seven Roses Unit," I told them. "Are you interested?"

The mouselets shared a look and **smiled** happily.

"Yes!" they shouted together.





The **SEVEN ROSES UNIT** is an important department in a top secret research facility. The unit specializes in fantasy worlds, and the Thea Sisters and I have helped them solve several fascinating **MYSTERIES**.

“I know it’s your break,” I went on. “But I thought brushing up on fantasy languages would be a **good idea**. This way, if Will Mystery calls for our **HELP** again, we’ll be ready.”

“Of course!” Pam said.

“Does that mean we’ll go to their headquarters?” Nicky asked. She loves to **TRAVEL**.

I nodded. “Yes.”

Paulina **happily** clapped her paws. “This will be more fun than any **vacation!**”

Just then, there was a **knock** on the office door.



I opened it and found a deliverymouse there. He was tapping his foot impatiently.

“YOU THEA STILTON?” he asked, in a very sharp tone.

When I said yes, he didn’t reply — he just had me sign a receipt, and then thrust a **S M A L L P A C K A G E** into my paws.

You Thea Stilton?



Yes! What is it?



TOP SECRET communication

“It’s from the **SEVEN ROSES UNIT!**” Paulina cried, recognizing the symbol stamped on the package.

Before I could open it, the **squeal** of a ringtone came from inside. I quickly opened the box and found a cell phone in it. Will Mystery’s face **popped up** on the screen, and I pressed the speakerphone button.

“**WILL!** It’s nice to hear from you,” I said.

“You, too, Thea,” he replied. “Hope you don’t mind the special-delivery phone. This phone line is **highly protected**, and only used in an **EMERGENCY.**”

“Is that why you’re calling?” I asked.

“I’m afraid so,” he replied. “There’s a



problem in the **Land of Clouds**.”

“The Land of Clouds?” I asked. The Thea Sisters gathered closer to the phone, **anxious** to know more.



“It is one of the **secret fantasy worlds**,” he explained. “I believe that it is in danger.”

“Did a new **CRACK** appear on the map in the Hall of the Seven Roses?” Nicky asked. The map was a **MAGICAL** one, and a crack meant that a fantasy land was in trouble.

“That’s **EXACTLY** what happened,” Will confirmed. “I must travel to the Land of Clouds as soon as possible.”

“Do you need our help?” I asked.

WILL MYSTERY AND THE SEVEN ROSES UNIT



WILL MYSTERY

He is the head of the Seven Roses Unit, a research team that studies fantasy worlds — the worlds inhabited by characters from myths and legends.

HIDDEN HQ

The headquarters of the Seven Roses Unit is hidden beneath the ice of Antarctica. Only the members of the unit know how to find the entrance.



CRYSTAL PENDANTS

Researchers who work for the unit receive a crystal pendant in the shape of a rose. It contains their ID and allows them to open doors throughout the headquarters.





THE MAGICAL MAP AND THE CRYSTAL ELEVATOR

In the heart of the unit, inside the Hall of the Seven Roses, a magical map shows all of the fantasy worlds and their state of health. When a world is in danger, a crack appears on the map. Also in the hall is the crystal elevator, which leads directly to the fantasy worlds. Only Will Mystery can operate it.



THEA STILTON AND THE THEA SISTERS

Thea and her students became agents of the Seven Roses Unit due to their great talent as investigators. They work undercover, and when they receive a request for help, they are always ready to lend a paw.



“Of course!” said Will. “That’s why I called you. You are the **PERFECT** agents for this job. When can you leave?”

I looked at the Thea Sisters, who were **beaming** with excitement.

“*Right away!*” I replied.

Will smiled. “Great! I will send our helicopter to pick you up at **SUNSET**.”

“We’ll be ready,” I promised.

The call ended and I turned to my students. Everyone’s eyes **shone** with enthusiasm.

**WE WERE READY TO SET OFF
ON A NEW ADVENTURE!**



FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS!

“**READY?**” I asked, standing in the doorway of Pam and Colette’s room. The Thea Sisters had gathered there to finish their final packing.



“I just need to find my **brush**,” Colette said, looking through all her drawers. “That Antarctic air can be tough on my **FUR**. Ah, here it is!”

We headed outside as the sun was setting. Luckily, all the other students and teachers were inside the **DINING HALL** for dinner, and they didn’t notice us leave. That’s always important when you’re



on a **TOP SECRET MISSION.**

“What a lovely evening,” Violet said, looking at the **pink-tinged** sky.

We hurried to the heliport down by the docks.

“**There it is!**” Paulina cried, pointing upward.

A helicopter **rapidly** descended toward us without making a sound. When it landed, we saw the **symbol** of the Seven Roses Unit on its side.

The door of the aircraft opened, and the pilot signaled for us to board.

“I’m Agent 927,” he said. “Welcome!”

I sat next to him. “Thank you, Agent. This is a **very quiet** helicopter.”

“It’s an E-67 Ultrasonic,” he informed me. “It’s as quiet as a **RAT** sneaking through a **CAT** convention.”



Oooh!

Here's the helicopter!



Pam laughed. “That’s pretty quiet.”

We all took our seats.

“**FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS!**” the pilot ordered.

We obeyed, and seconds later the helicopter rose up as silently as a leaf lifted by the **WIND**.

Below us, the lights of Mouseford Academy turned on one by one. Soon, our beloved island became just a **tiny** dot in the middle of the sea.

**OUR ADVENTURE
HAD BEGUN!**



INTO THE ICEBERG

Before we knew it, we could see **Antarctica** below us.

“This helicopter is really fast,” I remarked.

“The E-67 is as fast as a **RAT** being chased out of a **CAT** convention,” Agent 927 said.

“I think he needs to work on some new jokes,” Pam whispered to Nicky.

It was dark outside, but in the distance I could see a huge **WHITE ICEBERG** gleaming in the moonlight. The helicopter was flying **DANGEROUSLY CLOSE** to it!

“We’re going to hit it!” cried Colette.

But our pilot just stared calmly ahead.

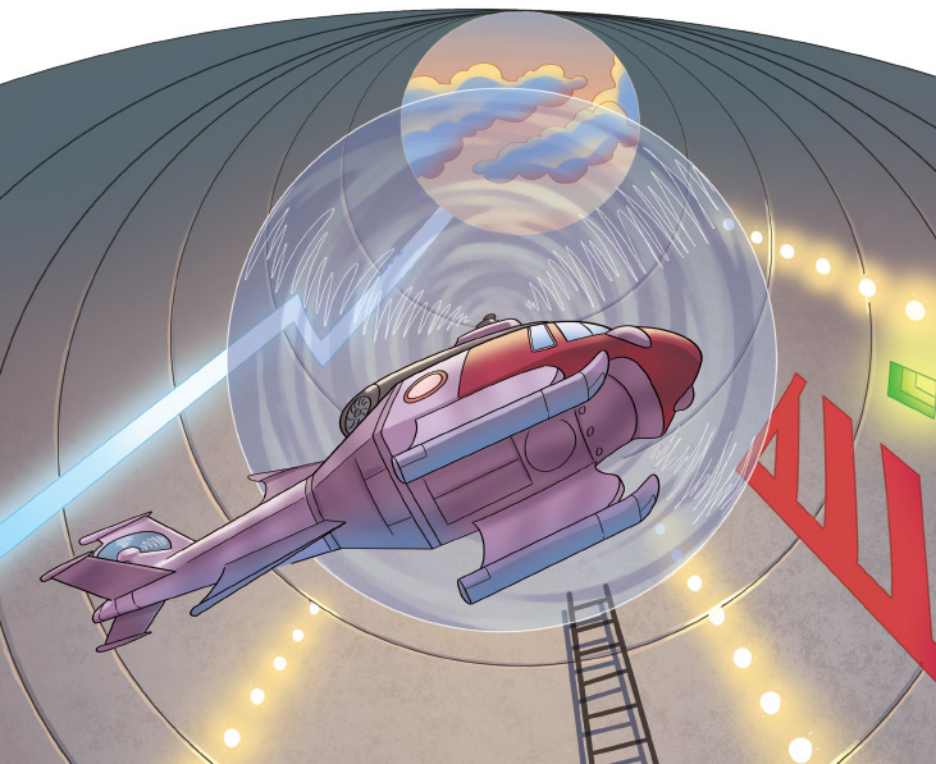
We moved **CLOSER** and **CLOSER** to the iceberg. I was about to grab the controls myself when Agent 927 pushed a



button . . . and a hole opened up in the iceberg!

The pilot expertly flew the helicopter into the opening, and we dropped into a **vertical tunnel**.

“Holey cheese!” yelled a shocked





Pam. “We’re descending into the iceberg!”

We were all surprised. The Thea Sisters pressed their noses against the windows so they wouldn’t miss a moment of the **incredible maneuver**. At the bottom of the tunnel I saw a platform with the symbol of the Seven Roses Unit on it. The helicopter landed on it, and the pilot turned off the motor.

When we stepped out of the helicopter, **WILL MYSTERY** was waiting for us.

“Good to see you!” I said.

“Did you have a good trip?” he asked.

I looked over at Agent 927. “It was definitely **exciting**!” I replied.

“That tunnel is amazing!” said Nicky. “Is it new?”

Will nodded. “It’s our newest entrance. The iceberg is the **perfect cover**,” he said.



“And what do you think of the E-67?”

Pam grinned. “It’s as quiet as a **RAT** sneaking through a **CAT** convention, and just as fast,” she said, and her friends laughed.

Will shook his head. “You sound like Agent 927.”

“But seriously, it’s quite **exceptional**,” said Paulina. “I can’t believe how quickly it got us here.”

Colette nodded. “It’s a shame we can’t use it to travel to the **fantasy worlds**.”

Will’s smile faded. “That reminds me, we must get moving. Please follow me. There is something I need to **Show** you.”



THE SEVEN ROSES UNIT

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Landing platform | 5. Supercomputer station |
| 2. Interior elevator | 6. Break room |
| 3. Access to the iceberg | 7. Research laboratory |
| 4. Hall of the Seven Roses | 8. Wardrobe storage room |



NO TIME TO WASTE!

Will led us to the Hall of the Seven Roses. It has **BEAUTIFUL** columns, **spectacular** statues, and the **incredible living map** on the ceiling, floor, and walls.

Will used a laser pointer to show us the part of the map that depicted the Land of Clouds.

“See?” he asked in a worried voice, aiming the pointer between two **blue clouds**.

“There’s a **CRACK**, just like you said,” I replied.

“Yes, and unfortunately it’s getting **longer** every day,” he explained.

“A crack means that something **BAD** is happening there, right?” asked Nicky.



Look!

Oh no!

Hmm...



Will nodded. “Yes, sadly.”

“**That's terrible!**” said Paulina.

“But we can try to help,” Will said. “Let’s head to the supercomputer and see what we can find out.”

We left the Hall of the Seven Roses and entered a hallway with cool **METAL** floors and walls. Will stopped in front of a door and passed his crystal rose pendant in front of a **scanner**. After he said his name out loud, the door opened.

We stepped into the **supercomputer station**. The machine inside contained all of the information about fantasy worlds that the researchers had collected.

Will sat down at the keyboard and began to type, his paws moving **SWIFTLY**. Fast sequences of numbers and letters scrolled on the **ENORMOUSE SCREEN** in front of us.



Then Will typed in a single phrase: “**Land of Clouds.**”

The computer gently *hummed*.

“This may take a while,” Will said. “We’ve collected a lot of data over the years.”

We stared at the screen, **Waiting** for it to retrieve the information. Finally, an image appeared.

“**HERE WE GO,**” Will said, and he began to read aloud the story of the **Land of Clouds.**

THE CLOUD FAIRIES



According to legend, the Cloud Fairies have lived in the sky since the start of time. There are many kinds of Cloud Fairies. One type, the Weaver Fairies, produce a silver thread when they dream at night. During the day, they use this thread to weave the clouds.



QUEEN NEPHELE



Queen Nephele rules the Land of Clouds with the assistance of the Grand Council of Fairies.



THE CLOUD CASTLE



The queen and her council dwell in the beautiful Cloud Castle. It constantly changes location because it is suspended by the air currents that crisscross the kingdom.



THE THIRTEEN-STAR X DIAMOND

The entrance to the Land of Clouds will only open when thirteen stars in the sky align to form the shape of a diamond. This passageway can be found on the world's highest peak.



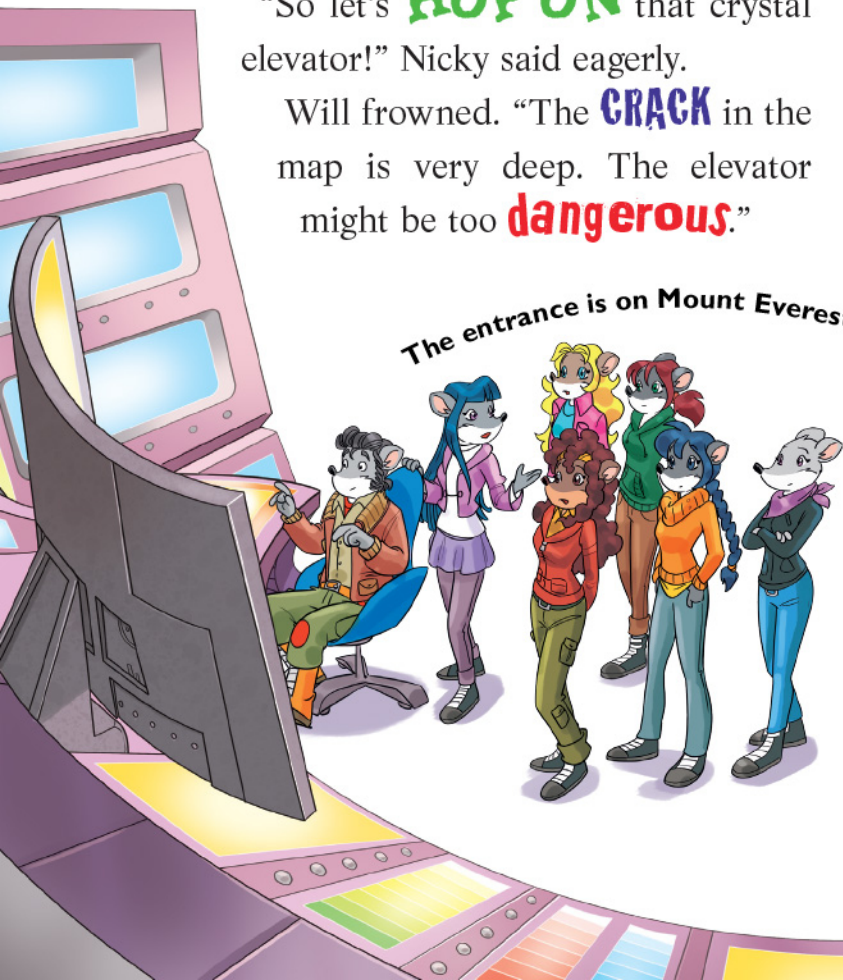


“We must **TRAVEL** to the Land of Clouds as soon as possible,” Will said. “There is no time to waste.”

“So let’s **HOP ON** that crystal elevator!” Nicky said eagerly.

Will frowned. “The **CRACK** in the map is very deep. The elevator might be too **dangerous**.”

The entrance is on Mount Everest!





“So to get there, we need to use the other entrance . . . the one on the world’s **HIGHEST** peak,” I reasoned.

Will nodded. “Exactly!”

“That’s **MOUNT EVEREST!**” * Violet cried.

“Yes. With a summit at 29,035 feet, it’s the **HIGHEST POINT** on Earth,” Will said.

“**Cheese and crackers!** I can’t even imagine being that high,” said Pam.

“And I love mountain climbing, but climbing Everest is a real challenge,” Nicky pointed out. “How will we do that?”

“We’ll take the **helicopter**,” said Will.

“Is it safe, at that altitude?” I asked.

“The **E-6⁹** can do things other copters can’t,” Will reminded me. “But before we head out, we need more information.”

* Mount Everest is part of the Himalayan mountain range and is located in Nepal. At 29,035 feet, it’s the highest mountain on Earth.



A DIAMOND IN THE SKY

“Can the computer tell us exactly where the entrance to the **Land of Clouds** is?” Violet asked.

Will started typing on the keyboard. What **popped up** on the big screen **SURPRISED** all of us. Instead of a map with GPS coordinates, the image of a fantastical **elephant** appeared on the screen! It had seven trunks, and each one was a different color of the **rainbow**.

“How beautiful,” Colette said.

“And there’s a **STORY** that goes with it,” said Paulina.

The room grew silent as we all read the story on the screen.

THE LEGEND OF THE ELEPHANT OF THE CLOUDS

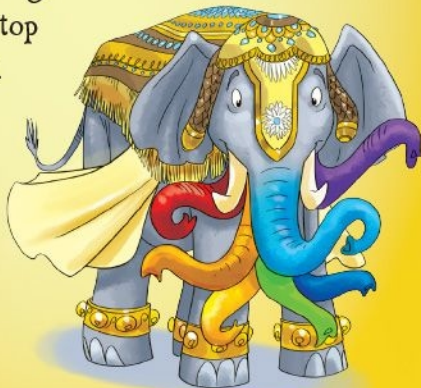


The voice of the mountain tells the story of a creature gifted with extraordinary strength, but also with infinite kindness.

The winds that buffet the peaks repeat his name like a song: Airavata. He resembles an elephant with seven long trunks. With them, he sprays water into the sky and creates thick clouds. Legend says these clouds float all the way up to the stars, to the enchanted Land of Clouds.

The entrance to this magical land is located in Airavata's home: the great Diamond Rock on top of Mount Everest.

The Rock shines all day and night like the brightest of stars — but only those with a watchful eye and a pure heart can spot it.





“So we need to search for a **LEGENDARY ROCK** that is hidden from plain sight,” Paulina said thoughtfully.

“And don’t forget,” Violet added, “the entrance to the Land of Clouds only opens when **thirteen stars** in the sky form a diamond.”

“Then let’s take a telescope outside and see if we’re **lucky**,” Will said.

We all went to the wardrobe room and bundled up in jackets, scarves, and hats. We were ready for the cold of **Antarctica**!



Will handed a scarf to Paulina, and their paws touched briefly. They both **blushed** a little bit. Those two had admired each other since our first mission. It made sense



to me, since they were both drawn to **RESEARCHING** like mice are drawn to cheese.

We all boarded the elevator to the surface of the ice.

WHOOSH! It lifted us up through headquarters. Outside, the **sky** was a dark blue storm of stars.

“It’s like a beautiful painting,” Violet said.

Suddenly, something bright **streaked** across the sky.

“**A shooting star!**” said Paulina.

“Make a wish, everyone!” Nicky said.

And so we did, in the silence of the icy polar night. It was Colette who brought us out of our thoughts.

“Should we be looking for a **DIAMOND?**” she asked.

“You’re always thinking about jewelry,” Pam teased.

We all laughed, including Colette.
Meanwhile, Will had set up his telescope
and was **SEARCHING** the sky.

"I think I found them!" he said. "We're
lucky. The **thirteen stars** are almost in
position. Look!"

I looked through the lens of the telescope.

The stars are almost aligned!





Will was right.

“It’s true. They’re almost in the shape of a perfect **DIAMOND**,” I said.

“There’s no time to lose,” Will said. “I’ll tell Agent 927 to get the **helicopter** ready. We’ve got to get to Mount Everest and search for **Diamond Rock** before the entrance to the Land of Clouds opens!”





ON THE WORLD'S HIGHEST PEAK

We immediately went back down into headquarters and Will led us toward a storage room that contained the **clothes** and **TOOLS** needed for any kind of mission.

As we **hurried** down a long hallway, an agent approached Will.

“Everything’s ready. The helicopter is waiting for you on the platform,” she said.

Will nodded. “**Thank you**. We’ll be there in a moment.”

The agent left, and we entered the big storage room. Equipment filled the shelves that lined the walls. Racks held clothes suitable for any kind of climate, from



EXTREME HEAT to **extreme cold**.

“**Great chunks of cheddar!**” said Pam. “There’s so much cool stuff here. This is better than an all-you-can-eat cheese buffet. Well, almost.”

Will laughed. “We’ll need some **MOUNTAIN-CLIMBING** gear and some **OXYGEN** masks,” he said, pulling equipment from the shelves. “The unit has made some great advances in technology.”

I was a little bit **worried**. “Will, summiting Everest is a challenge for seasoned mountain climbers. I’m not sure we’ll be able to do this.”

“Seasoned mountain climbers don’t have the unit’s special equipment,” Will replied. “It will give us a real **ADVANTAGE**.”

I nodded. “That makes me feel better.”

“I have **faith** in all of you,” Will said.



“But if any of you feel like you’re **struggling**, let me know immediately.”

“**We promise!**” the Thea Sisters all said.

Once all the gear was packed up, we headed back to the **helicopter** and got on board.

Our new **MISSION** was beginning!

As quietly as before, the helicopter





ascended the **tunnel** and flew up into the night sky. Then we began our *IMPOSSIBLY FAST* journey north and east to Nepal.

Before we knew it, Will was pointing out the **snow-capped** peak of Mount Everest, silhouetted against the **pink** morning sky.

“There it is,” he said.

“It’s truly **majestic**,” I said admiringly.

“I reminds me of the Andes, back home in Peru,” Paulina said. “Even though the **mountains** there aren’t as high.”

“Who knows? Maybe we’ll have an **adventure** there one day,” Will said, and Paulina smiled.

“Where should I land?” Agent 927 asked.

Will leaned forward, trying to spot **Diamond Rock**.

“I think I see something **sparkling** over there,” he said. “Can we get closer?”



What a breathtaking view!





The **PILOT** kept the copter steady as he flew toward the **GLITTERING** snow.



“Whatever is down there, it’s shining like a **star**, just like the computer said,” Will remarked.

“And it can only be seen by a watchful **EYE** and a pure heart,” Paulina reminded him.

“I think maybe it can only be seen if you know to **LOOK** for it,” I reasoned.

“Hold on!” Agent 927 cried suddenly. “We’ve got **HEAVY WINDS!**”



DANGER AT HIGH ALTITUDE!

We held on to our seats as the wind **shook** the helicopter.

“I can’t land here,” the pilot reported. “But I can try a little farther down the peak. You’ll have to **HIKE** up.”

We all agreed that was the safest thing to do. We landed, and an **icy wind** blasted us as we stepped out onto the mountain.

“Strange,” Will said, looking around. “There are **clouds** up by the peak, but everywhere else the sky is **BLUE**.”

We followed his gaze. He was right.





“It’s so beautiful, but I’ve never been so cold!” Colette remarked. “Luckily, I have my

cocoa-butter-and-honey lip balm, perfect for the coldest climates. It comes in twelve shades of pink. I’m thinking that antique rose might complement the high-altitude sky the most, don’t you?”



We all laughed, and Pam took a small, round tin from her pocket.

“I brought some **SHEA BUTTER**,” she said. “It might not be pink, but it’s great at protecting your lips from the cold.”

Will took some. “Thanks, Pam!” he said. “Now, let’s get going before we **freeze**!”

He opened his pack and handed each of us an **ICE HAMMER** to help with the steep climb. Then we headed toward the



peak in single file, with Will at the lead. The wind blasted us with every step we took. These were the most **EXTREME** conditions I had ever experienced!

We didn't get far before Will stopped us and took out the **oxygen masks** that he had showed us before.



“At this altitude, **BREATHING** becomes more difficult, because the higher you climb, the less oxygen there is in the air,” he explained. “But Seven Roses Unit scientists have developed these supercompact oxygen masks. Put these on and you’ll see how much easier it is to breathe.”

We quickly put on the **masks**, and I could immediately feel a difference.

“We can’t stop here for long,” I said. “We’ll

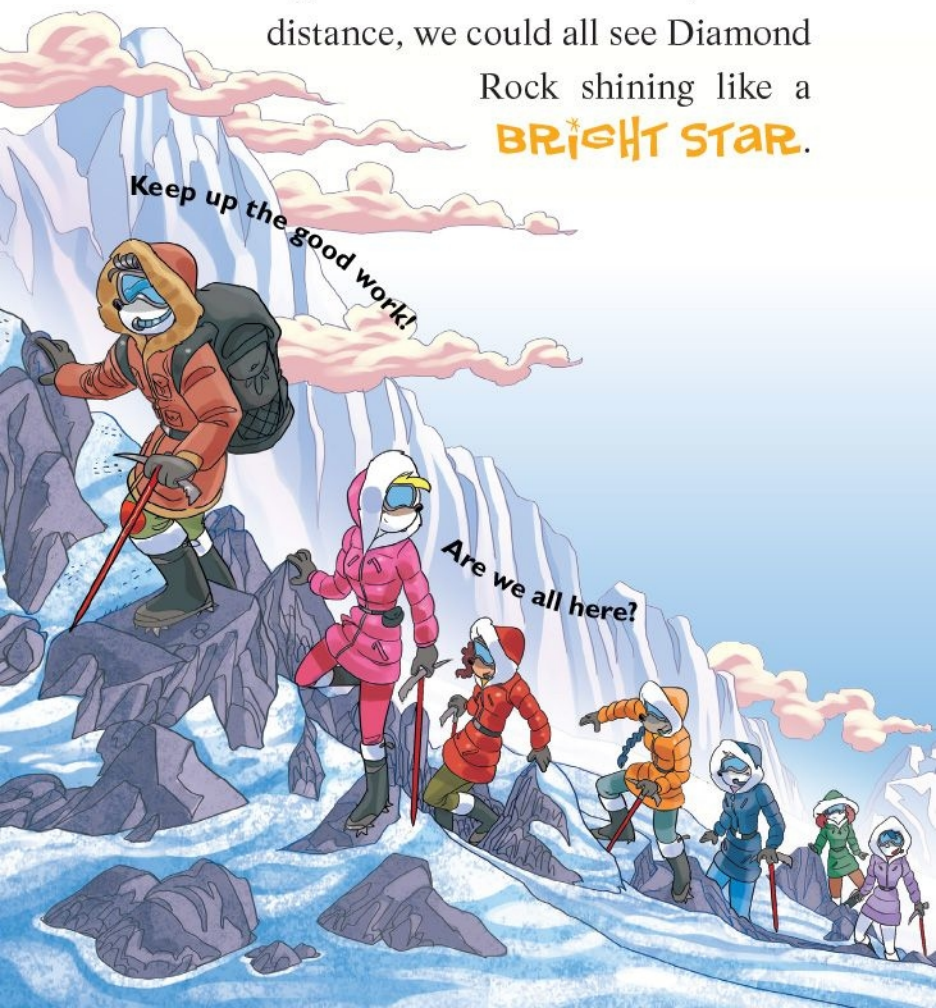
DANGER AT



HIGH ALTITUDE!

risk **freezing** if we do.”

Will checked to make sure our masks were on correctly, and we were on our way. In the distance, we could all see Diamond Rock shining like a **BRIGHT STAR**.





We hiked toward it, our mountain-climbing boots **crunching** the snow.

We had to cross a vast stretch of **WHITENESS**. It was difficult to even tell how far we had to go. No one spoke for a while.

Suddenly, we heard a shout.

“HEEEEEEEEEEEELP!”

It was Paulina. The ice had opened up beneath her, and she was **slipping** into a crevasse — a break in the ice. This one was just a few feet wide.

We all watched **helplessly** as Paulina was swallowed by the crevasse.

“Paulina!” Nicky yelled, rushing toward the **CRACK**. But Will held her back.

“It’s **DANGEROUS**,” he said. “We have to do this slowly and carefully.” He took a strong, thin climbing rope from his pack.



I slowly **inched** my way toward the crevasse.

“Paulina? Are you hurt?” I called down.

“No, but I can’t climb out!” she replied.

“I’ll **climb down** and get her,” Nicky offered right away. I could see how badly she wanted to help her friend.

Will nodded. “Okay. But go **slowly**, all right?”

Nicky agreed, and Will harnessed the rope to her. He tied the other end around a **LARGE ROCK**.

“Hold on tightly as you descend,” he told Nicky. “We’ll keep the rope **STEADY** up here.”

Nicky nodded, and then slowly but confidently used the rope to **climb down** into the crevasse. We all held our breath.

Would Nicky be able to **save** Paulina?



Hold steady!

I'm coming!

Nicky!



THE ICE CAVE

“Here they come!” Colette cried as she, Will, Pam, Violet, and I pulled on the rope with all our strength. Paulina climbed out of the crevasse first, followed by Nicky.

You're safe!



“I’m so glad you’re **safe and sound**!” I said.

There were **hugs** all around. We were all relieved that no one had been hurt. That fall could have happened to any of us.

“**Diamond Rock** isn’t far ahead,” Will said, pointing, and we continued our journey.

After what had happened to Paulina, we watched the ice



with each step we took. **Snowflakes** started to **swirl** around us, making it even more difficult to move forward.

"I can't feel my legs anymore," Violet confessed.

"You said it, Vi," Colette agreed. "And I am going to need a ton of **FUR CONDITIONER** once we get out of this wind!"

"Maybe they serve **PIZZA** at Diamond Rock," Pam said hopefully.

Nicky shook her head. "Really, Pam?"

"Hey, an elephant's got to eat, right?" Pam asked. "Even a **mythical** one."

"Now that you mention it, how can we be sure that Airavata really lives there?" Colette asked. "He could just be a **legend**."

"In the Seven Roses Unit, we have learned that most legends are based on **truth**," Will said.



Just then, I thought I heard a **sound**.

"Did you hear that?" I asked.

Pam shook her head. "No. What did it sound like?"

"Like the ringing of a **bell**, or something similar," I replied.

"Maybe it was just the **wind**," Nicky suggested.

Finally, the **glittering** structure that we thought must be Diamond Rock was within reach. We climbed up one last **steep incline**, and then we were standing in front of it.

"**Holey cheese!**" Pam exclaimed.

"I have never seen anything like this," Will said, his voice filled with wonder.

Diamond Rock shimmered before us. It seemed like it was made of ice, but a closer look revealed that the shine came from



bright crystals. There was a big hole in the rock, like the mouth of a cave.

We hurried to take **REFUGE** inside. Once again, I swore I heard the sound of **bells**.

“Thea, I hear the **bells**, too,” Will said before I could even open my mouth.





“There must be someone inside the cave,” Paulina guessed.

“It could be **Airavata** himself!” Nicky said, her eyes **GLEAMING** with excitement.

Violet looked thoughtful. “The computer didn’t say anything about bells, though.”

Will started handing out **flashlights**. “We’ve come this far. Let’s keep going.”

We slowly made our way into the **CAVE** — and soon found that the path was blocked by a wall of ice.

“It looks like a **frozen waterfall**,” Colette remarked.

Will and I approached the wall, studying it.

“It’s not a **SOLID** wall,” I said. “There are thin openings between the frozen waves of water, see?”

Will nodded. "I think I can get through this one."

He took off his backpack and **slipped** through the opening.

A few seconds later, he stuck his head out. "The passage continues. Let's keep **MOVING**."

We squeezed through the **NARROW** opening one by one and made our way through the passageway beyond it. The crystal walls **gleamed** every time our flashlights hit them.

"It reminds me of a **fairy-tale** illustration,"

Follow me!





Violet said, looking around wide-eyed.

The farther we went, the warmer it became in the cave. It was so odd. It felt like **spring**!

“Let’s take off our climbing gear,” suggested Will. “We’ll be able to move more **quickly** without it.”

We stashed our gear behind a **ROCK** and made our way farther down the passageway. Soon, we heard the sound of **bells** once again. Now, they were closer.

The passage opened up into what looked like a **GRAND AMPHITHEATER**.

“This place is **amazing**!” Pam said, spinning around in wonder.

Jingle! Jingle!

“My fur is standing on end with excitement,” said Colette, shivering a little. “I have such a **strange** feeling — like we’re about to encounter something wonderful.”



“I’m feeling it, too,” Paulina said, and the rest of us nodded in agreement.

I pointed my *flashlight* ahead of us.

“Look — stairs!” I said.

I shone my flashlight up the steps. At the top was a platform . . . and what we saw on the platform made us *gasp* in wonder.

An enormouse *elephant* stood up there. He had seven trunks, one in each color of the *rainbow*. Around his legs he wore *GOLD BRACELETS* decorated with tiny bells that rang with each step. He moved slowly, swaying as if he were *dancing*.

And he was heading right for us!



Look!

Oooh!

Wow!

Airavata!





AIRAVATA, THE ENCHANTED ELEPHANT

“Lower your flashlights,” I said, worried that the light might be bothering the elephant. Our eyes took a moment to get used to the **SHADOWY DARKNESS**.

The creature moved closer to us, accompanied by the **JANGLING** of bells. He was **huge** and **STRONG**, but I sensed a gentleness about him.

“I am **Airavata**, master of this mountain, and of the winds, the snow, and the clouds here. Who are you?” he demanded in a deep voice.

Will took a step forward. “My name is Will Mystery and I am a researcher. This is my team.”



“What are you looking for here?”

“We study **fantasy worlds**,” Will replied. “And we are here because we are trying to reach the Land of Clouds.”

The elephant’s **EYES** widened. Then he was silent.

“Please excuse us for entering your **CAVE** without your permission. We did not mean to disturb you,” Violet said. “But we know that you are the only one who can point out the **secret passage** to the Land of Clouds.”

The elephant’s **yellow** trunk reached for Violet and sniffed around her. I could see that she was a little **afraid**, but she stayed still.

Then the elephant did the same with all of us. Finally, he pulled back his trunk.

“You all have **pure hearts**, and you are



telling the truth,” he announced. “Now explain to me why you want to go up there, among the silver clouds.”

“The Land of Clouds is in **DANGER**,” Paulina explained. “We believe that something very **SERIOUS** is happening there.”

Airavata didn’t seem surprised to hear this. He shook his large head, and his seven trunks **waved** from side to side.

“I don’t know how you found out, but you are right,” he revealed. “For some time, the fairies have no longer been **weaving** clouds. I am the only one who creates them now, so at least it will **snow** on the mountain.”

“Then this must be the danger that is **threatening** the Land of Clouds,” Paulina realized. “If the fairies aren’t weaving any more clouds, sooner or later their entire world is in danger of **disappearing**, right?”

"I'm afraid so,"
Airavata replied
sadly.

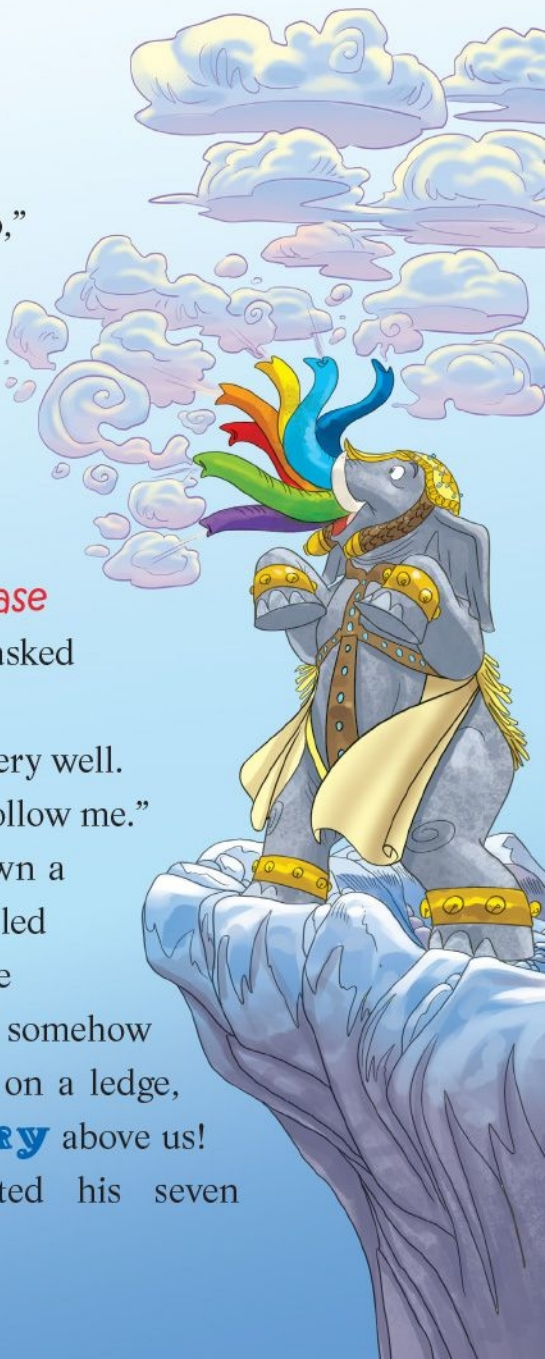
"We must find
out why this is
happening," said
Colette.

"Can you please
help us?" Pam asked
the elephant.

He nodded. "Very well.
I will help you. Follow me."

He took us down a
passageway that led
deep into the
mountain — but somehow
emerged outside on a ledge,
with **blue sky** above us!

Airavata pointed his seven



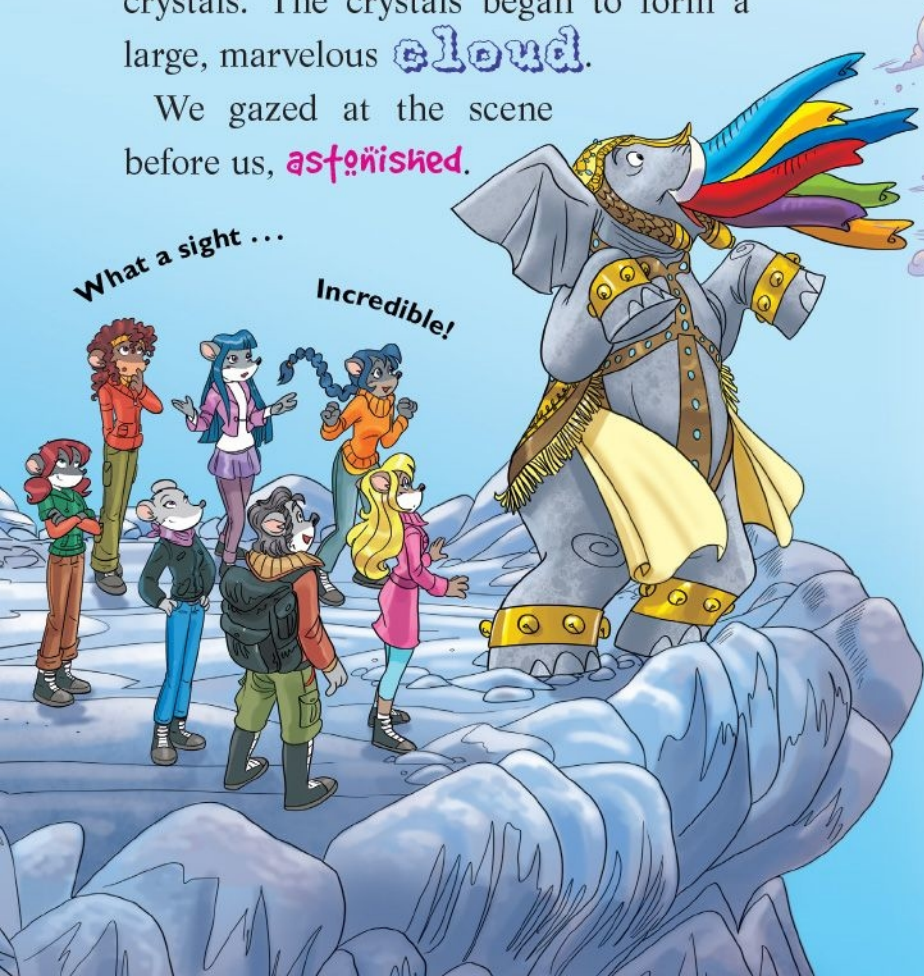


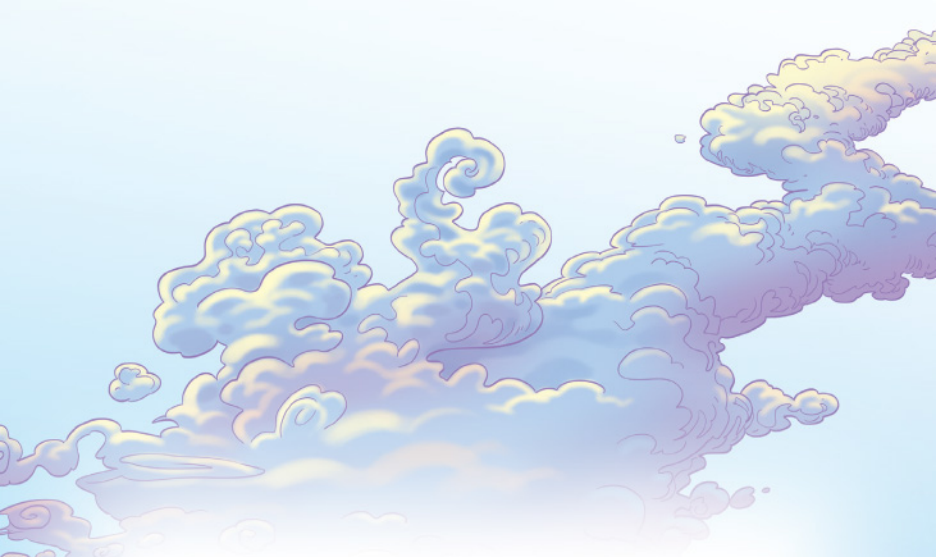
trunks toward the sky and began to blow, shooting out sprays of water. Once the water **drops** hit the cold air they became tiny crystals. The crystals began to form a large, marvelous **cloud**.

We gazed at the scene before us, **astounded**.

What a sight ...

Incredible!





“But where do you get the water to **spray**?” asked Nicky.

“I suck it up from a **secret lake** in the mountain,” Airavata replied.

He shot another **spray** of water into the sky, creating a huge **bank of clouds**. Then he looked at us.

“Very well, my friends. **The road to the Land of Clouds is open!**” he announced.

“But how do we get there?” Will asked.

“It’s very simple,” Airavata replied. “You must climb the **clouds** and follow the **path** that I have created for you.”



AIRAVATA'S POETRY

"I will help you start," Airavata said. He reached out a **trunk** toward Will and grabbed him around the waist with it, then **LIFTED** him onto the clouds.



But as soon as Will's feet hit the **clouds**, he began to **sink** through them. Airavata quickly brought him back down to the ledge.

"It didn't work!" Will said, disappointed.

"**I'll try!**" Colette offered.

Airavata picked her



up with a trunk and set her down on the clouds. But even she couldn't manage to **stand** on them for more than a few seconds.

"Why can't Will or Colette stand on the clouds?" I asked.

"Only the **light** can walk on the clouds," Airavata replied.

"But I'm in great shape!" Colette protested.

"I am speaking of lightness of the **heart** and **soul**," the elephant explained. "You have **pure hearts**, so you should be able to do it. But something is holding you back."

"What can we do?" asked Paulina.

"You must believe in your **deepest wishes** and your most **secret dreams**," Airavata said. "Only then will you be light enough to stand on the clouds."

"But we do **believe** in our dreams," Violet said confidently.



“Maybe not always,” the elephant said wisely. “It is normal to have doubts. But you must believe that anything is **possible**, even when things look bleak. Only then will your heart be **free** to carry you above it all, to take you where **dreams** are born.”

“Those are beautiful words,” I said.

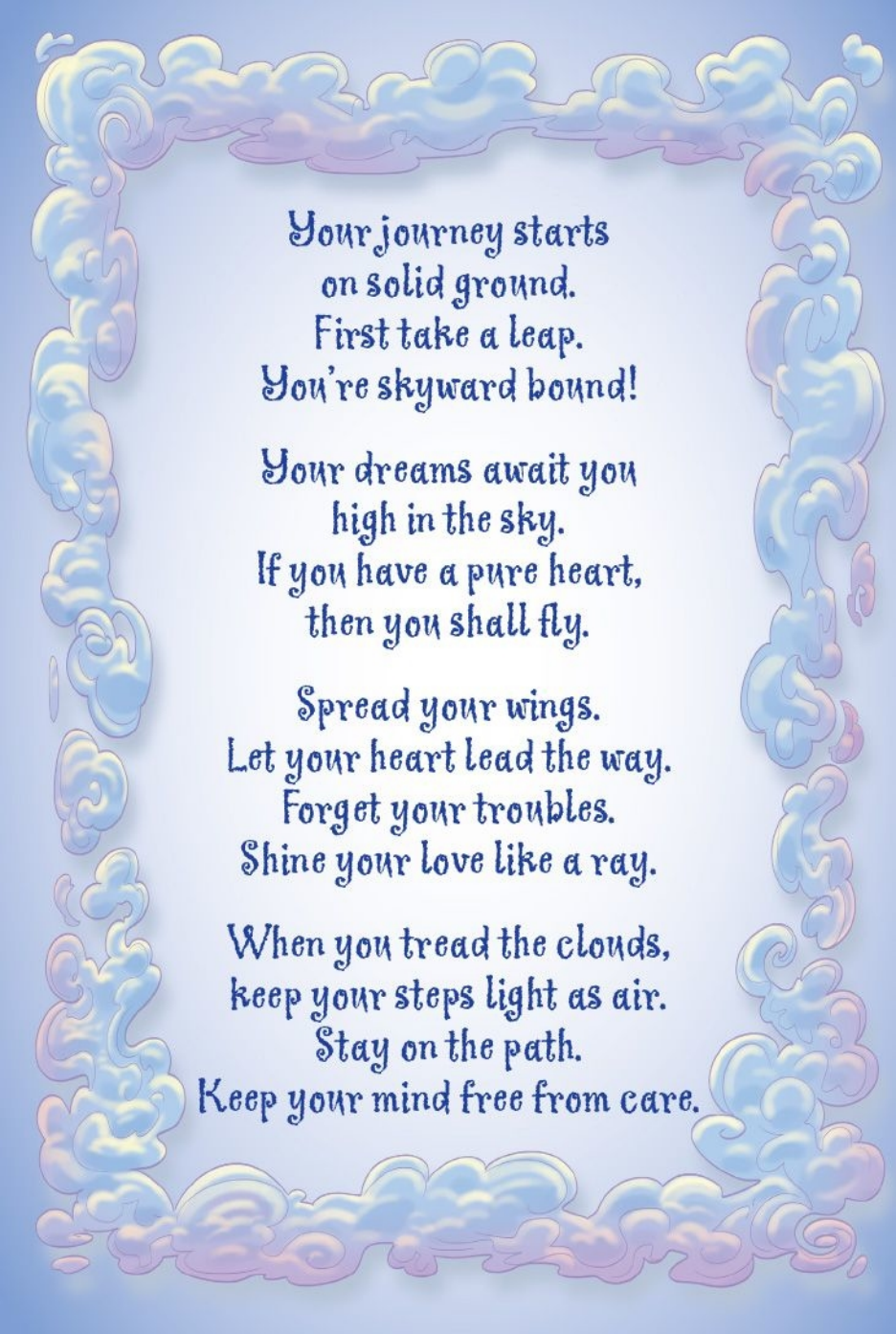
Airavata smiled. “Now, listen,” he began, and then he recited a **POEM**. As he spoke, his words were spelled out in **silver threads** in the clouds overhead.



“That is a **wonderful** poem,” Colette said.

“Repeat it to yourself when you land on the clouds,” Airavata said. “It will make you feel **free** and **light**, so you won’t sink.”

We read the poem written overhead, trying to remember the words. Then, one by one, Airavata **lifted** us onto the clouds.



Your journey starts
on solid ground.
First take a leap.
You're skyward bound!

Your dreams await you
high in the sky.
If you have a pure heart,
then you shall fly.

Spread your wings.
Let your heart lead the way.
Forget your troubles.
Shine your love like a ray.

When you tread the clouds,
keep your steps light as air.
Stay on the path.
Keep your mind free from care.



I repeated the poem in my mind, and I think everyone else did, too. This time, we didn't **sink!**

We all looked at our feet, squeakless. We were standing on a soft, **wispy** layer of clouds!

"We're walking on clouds!" exclaimed a surprised Paulina.

"**Thank you!**" we all told the elephant.

He responded with a **POWERFUL TRUMPETING**. We waved good-bye, and then began to climb the cloud pathway he had created for us.





THE SILVER GATE

“Is that a **SIGN** up ahead?” Paulina asked, pointing.

“It is!” Colette said **happily** as we got closer. “It’s pointing the way to the **Land of Clouds**!”

“We must be close,” said Violet, and she shivered with **excitement**. “I wonder what we will find there!”

Nicky was at the rear of the line. She looked behind her, and suddenly cried out.

“The clouds





behind us are **disappearing!**"

"Then we'd better get **MOVING**," I said. We picked up our pace toward the sign along the path of **fluffy** clouds.

I cast a glance behind me. It made me a little nervous to see the clouds **vanishing**.

"Is there another **SIGN** up there?" Colette asked anxiously.

Then Will spotted something. "Not a sign, but I see something else. Look!"

Just ahead, we could see a tall **SILVER GATE** attached to two columns. It shone like a piece of jewelry and was decorated with **birds** on top of the posts.

We approached the gate, admiring its beauty.

"This must be the entrance," Will said.

"But it's **locked**, and we don't have a **key**," Paulina pointed out.



Look!

There it is!

Are we there?



Nicky gave the doors a *PUSH*, but they didn't budge.

"Now what?" Violet asked.

"Where there's a gate, there must be a gatekeeper," I said. Then I called out, "**Hello! Is anyone there?**" Can you please open the gate for us?"

I got no reply at first. Then, amazingly, the two columns holding up the gate began to spin around. And a **winged creature** flew out of each column!



THE FAIRY GUARDIANS

The two **winged creatures** stared at us with **icy blue** eyes. They looked like fairies of some kind, with long blue hair that **sparkled**. Each one had a thin gold crown around her forehead.

Before any of us could speak, one of them grasped a small **HARP** that was attached to a gold chain around her neck. She started to play a sweet **melody** with low, serious tones. Then the second fairy grasped her harp and began to play in **harmony** with the first.







“Should we **say something** to them?” Colette whispered.

“It would be rude to **interrupt** them while they are playing,” Paulina said. “We should wait until they are done.”

We listened for a few more minutes, but the fairies showed no sign of **ending** their song.

“Hmm,” said Will thoughtfully. “Maybe they are trying to communicate through **music**.”

I nodded. “I think you’re right. The music might be their **language**. By playing, they are trying to tell us something.”

Paulina looked excited. “That makes sense! The crystal elevator in the Seven Roses Unit responds to **musical** commands.”

“But what are they saying?” Colette asked.

“I have no idea,” I admitted.



I noticed that Will was rummaging through his backpack.

“Now, **WHERE IS IT?**” he was muttering.

After a few moments of searching, he pulled a **YELLOW** instrument from the backpack — a recorder. We all watched him **curiously** as he brought the recorder to his lips.

Will began to play a tune. It was a **melody** all his own, but it perfectly matched the tune being played by the two fairies. The **sweet tones** of the recorder melded with the clean tones of the two harps. The sound was truly beautiful!





“I wish I had my **VIOLIN** with me,” Violet said wistfully. “I would join in!”

We stood there listening, **enchanted**, until suddenly the two fairies stopped playing. They let go of their harps and listened carefully to Will play his recorder. Then they whispered to each other, smiling.

As if by magic, the silver gate slowly **opened**!

Will stopped playing his recorder. “**WE DID IT!**” he cheered.

“Well done, Will,” I said. “It’s a good thing you had that recorder with you.”

“**MUSIC** is very important in fantasy lands, so I always bring an instrument with me,” Will said. “A good agent is **ALWAYS PREPARED.**”

“And how did you know what to play?” Violet asked.



“I simply tried to meld with the music the fairies were playing,” Will explained. “After the first few notes, the tune just came **flowing** through me.”

“It sounded **beautiful**,” Paulina said.

“It did,” Colette agreed. “But maybe we should **GO** through the gates before these two lovely fairies change their minds.”

She pointed to them, and they both looked at us with very **SERIOUS** expressions.

“Good thinking, Colette,” Pam said.

We quickly passed through the gates, smiling and nodding **politely** at the fairies.

“Thank you,” I said.

Then, to my surprise, they began to speak.

“We are the **Fairy Guardians of the Land of Clouds**,” they sang together.

“Welcome! It is a pleasure to have friends of music visit our world.”



“And it is an **honor** for us to visit,” Will said. “Thank you for opening the silver gates for us.”

“Yes, thank you,” the **THEA SISTERS** said.

The fairies smiled back at us, and we were all struck by their **beauty**. Then, without another word, each one slipped back inside her **COLUMN**, leaving us alone.

“It was very nice of them to let us in,” Colette said, “but I wish they hadn’t left so quickly. I had a **million** questions for them!”



Will nodded. “Yes, I would have liked to ask for directions to the **CLOUD CASTLE.**”

“That would have been nice,” I agreed. “But somehow we always manage to find our way to where we need to go.”

Violet nodded. “Things can be very ***magical*** in these fantasy lands.”

All we could see ahead of us was an enormous expanse of clouds.

“They look like **whipped cream,**” Pam remarked.

We looked around, enchanted, as the silver gates closed behind us.





THE RIDDLES OF THE WIND ELVES

“How do we know where to go?” Paulina wondered. “There is no **CLEAR** path.”

“Maybe we’ll find another **SIGN**,” Colette suggested.

So we started walking straight ahead.

“It’s like we’re walking on **cotton**





candy,” Pam remarked.

“First whipped cream, now cotton candy. You must be **hungry**, Pam!” Nicky said.

“Come on, Nicky,” Pam said. “You know that I’m *always* hungry!”

We all laughed, and kept walking. Soon a strong **GUST OF WIND** chilled our fur, and **gray clouds** appeared in the sky.

“Look!” Paulina said, amazed. “There are tiny winged creatures up there!”

She was right. The strange beings were aiming **GOLD TRUMPETS** at the clouds and blowing into them.

“Hello!” I called out. They didn’t notice.

“Maybe **music** is their language, too,” Violet guessed.

“I don’t think so,” said Will. “Their trumpets aren’t making any sound. But maybe we can get their attention another



way. Follow my lead.”

Will took a **deep breath**, then blew hard toward the clouds. We all did the same.

The winged creatures stopped blowing into their trumpets and **STARED** at us, annoyed.

“**5+2** dare disturb the work of the Wind





Elves!" one exclaimed.

" **$2 \times 3 + 1$** clouds they must move!" said another.

" **$12 \div 4$** times will the Wind Elves blow them away!" threatened a third elf.





You must solve
our math riddles!



“NO! WAIT!” Will interrupted them. “Excuse us, please. We didn’t mean to **disturb** you. We are trying to reach the Cloud Castle. Can you help us?”

“3 x 3 - 7 math riddles of the Wind Elves must you solve first,” a fourth elf said.

Paulina understood right away. “So we have to solve two **MATH RIDDLES?**”

“Correct,” the elf replied, and the four elves huddled together, whispering. Then the first one spoke:

“Here is a lovely sight:
4 gray clouds and 3 white.
1 is purple, and 5 are blue.
But 3 blue float off, leaving 2.
How many clouds are in the sky?
You have 30 seconds to reply!”



The second elf took an hourglass full of colorful crystals out of his pocket. He turned it over and began to count down as the crystals fell, one by one. “**30... 29... 28 ...**”

We all concentrated on finding the answer.

“**10 clouds!**” Paulina suddenly cried.

The elves were **SURPRISED**. Only 17 crystals had fallen through the hourglass. One elf cried, “Exactly! And **10+3** crystals remain. Congratulations!”

“**Good job, Paulina!**” we cheered.

But the elves soon had a second math riddle for us.

“Listen closely, and please think.

There are 3 blue clouds and 2 pink.

Each blue cloud has 2 drops of rain.

Each pink cloud has 3 drops of rain.

How many drops of rain are in the sky?

You have 30 seconds to reply!”



The same elf turned over the **hourglass**.

“You could have given us some warning,” Colette muttered as we all tried to **solve** the math riddle.

This time, I had the answer first.

“**12!**” I cried, after only a few **CRYSTALS** had fallen.

We looked at the elf, waiting to see if I was correct.

“**correct**,” he said. “You have been very clever. Now you will receive the answer you seek.”

“**HOORAY!**” we cheered.

“Thank you,” said Will. “Can you please tell us how to get to the Cloud Castle?”

“It’s difficult to say,” the first elf replied. “The Cloud Castle is **ALWAYS MOVING**.”



If you like, one of us could stay with you as your guide.”

**“Thank you!
You are very kind!”**

Violet said.

Without another word, the Wind Elves positioned themselves behind the clouds and began to **blow**.

One of them waved good-bye to the others and blew his little **cloud** toward us. He settled right over our heads, as if he was waiting for a **COMMAND**.

“Well now, what do we do?” Nicky asked, looking up at the elf. But the elf said nothing.

“Maybe we should start **WALKING**,” Colette suggested, and she took a few steps forward. As she moved, the elf moved, too.

“It looks like he’s coming with us,” Paulina said.



The elf **quickly** took the lead. We followed him as he continued to push his **little cloud** forward with his trumpet.





THE ENCHANTED WOODS

The elf led us to another signpost in the clouds.

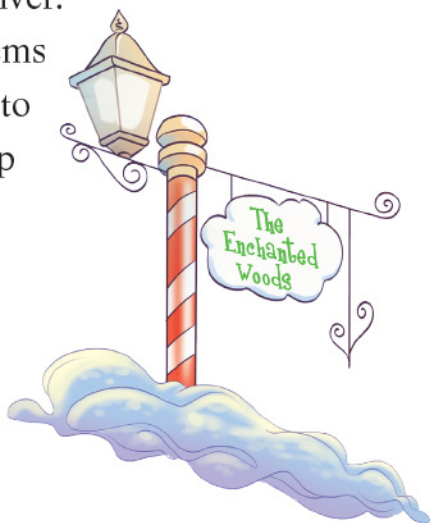
“The Enchanted Woods,” I read aloud.

“That name sounds a little **spooky**,” Colette said with a shiver.

“Well, the **elf** seems to think it’s the way to go,” I said, looking up at him.

So we followed the sign to a staircase made of **clouds**.

It led us to a forest — and the **trees** were made of clouds, too!





“It’s like something from a fairy tale,” Violet said.

“Yes, but let’s hope a **WICKED WITCH** doesn’t live here,” said Pam.

We walked toward the strange, **fluffy** trees. Everything was cloaked in a strange





silence. Then, Colette suddenly let out a cry.

“NOOOOO!” she wailed.

“Heeeeeelp!” yelled Violet.

I rushed over to them, but before I could reach them, I stopped, **confused.**





The fluffy trees around me had disappeared. Instead, I was back in the **GARDEN AT MOUSEFORD ACADEMY!**

I froze, shocked. How could I have gotten there? And it looked **different** from how I remembered it. The buildings were **CRACKED** and there were no students in sight.

Then an **OLD RODENT** slowly walked toward me, leaning on a cane.

“Professor de Mousus!” I said, recognizing the academy’s headmaster. My heart was beating **quickly**. “What is going on?”

But the headmaster didn’t reply. He just shook his head with a **sad** look on his face.

“Thea! Thea!” I heard a voice, and someone touched my arm.

I woke up, as if from a **dream**, and saw Will standing next to me.

“Help me, Will!” I said. “We must help



Professor de Mousus!”

“No, Thea, the professor is not here,” Will said.

“Yes, he is!” I insisted. “But he’s old, and the academy is in **RUINS**, and he needs our help!”

“It’s just an **illusion**, Thea,” Will told me.





“You are seeing your fears come true. It’s a trick of the Enchanted Woods.”

“What?” I asked. I was seeing the professor with my own **EYES**! “I don’t understand. How can this be an illusion?”

“The clouds here take the form of the **fears** of those who pass,” he replied.

“But why aren’t you seeing anything **frightening**?” I asked.

“I’ve been taking a course dedicated to learning how to control my emotions,” Will explained. “Try to **concentrate**, Thea.”

I closed my eyes and opened them again. But I could still see the **abandoned** academy and Professor de Mousus.

“Wait here for a moment,” Will said. He rushed off and brought all the Thea Sisters over. Each of them was **terrified** by the vision of her own fears, too.

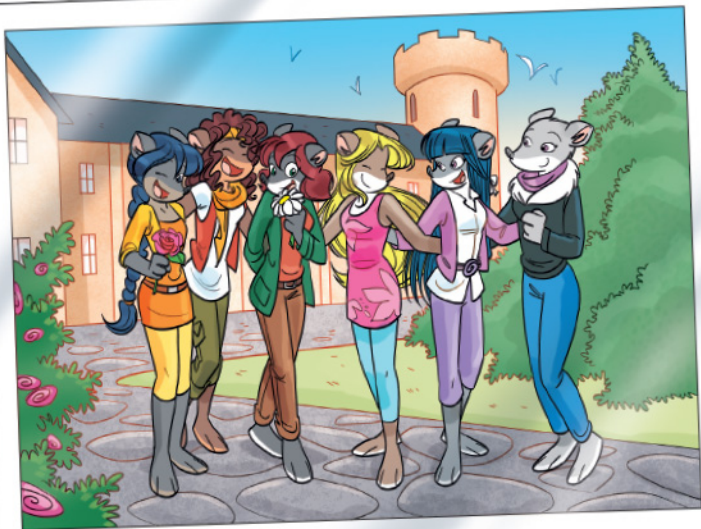


“Thea, I’m so **scared**,” Violet said, reaching out to grab my paw.

“You must think of positive things,” Will told us. “Think of your **friendship**.”

That gave Colette an idea. She reached into her pocket and pulled out her phone. Then she scrolled down the screen and pulled up a **photo**.

“**That’s us!**” Nicky cried. “It was right





after we finished our finals at the end of last semester.”

I was in the photo, too, and the **happy** memory came flooding back to me. The Thea Sisters had all done well on their tests and were **excited** about the vacation coming up.

When I looked up from the photo, I saw that my **vision** of the academy had vanished! I was back in the cloud forest. The others were looking around, wide-eyed.

“Everything’s back to normal,” Paulina said.

Nicky grinned. “All our fears have **vanished!**”

“Colette’s photo defeated them,” added Pam.

Will smiled. “Actually, what made your fears disappear was your **friendship!**”



A FAIRY IN DANGER

As soon as we took a few steps, the Enchanted Woods vanished behind us. But now we had another problem. Our Wind Elf and his little cloud had also **disappeared**. We had lost our guide!

“Now what do we do?” Pam asked as we looked around. The **landscape** had completely transformed. Now we were standing on a large platform of **clouds** that extended as far as the eye could see in every direction. There was no clear path to take.

“There must be a sign somewhere,” Colette said, but there was nothing on the **HORIZON** except for more clouds.



“WAIT! Can you hear that?” Paulina asked.

We all listened closely.

“It sounds like someone is **crying**,” I said.

“But where is it coming from?” Will asked.

Nicky concentrated. “I’m not sure, but it



sounds like a female voice.”

“Whoever is crying is very **sad**,” Colette observed. “We must help her!”

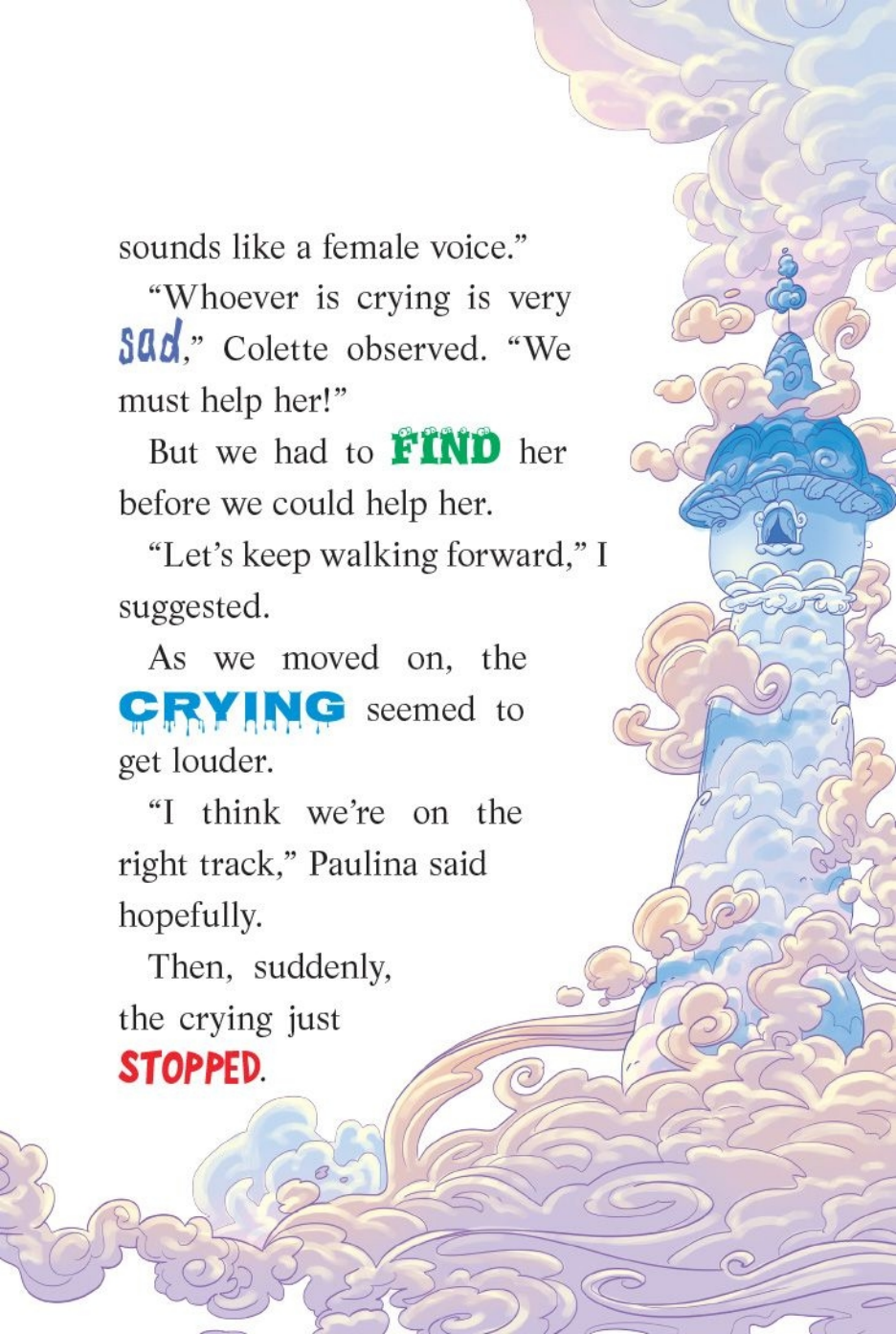
But we had to **FIND** her before we could help her.

“Let’s keep walking forward,” I suggested.

As we moved on, the **CRYING** seemed to get louder.

“I think we’re on the right track,” Paulina said hopefully.

Then, suddenly, the crying just **STOPPED**.





“Is somebody there?” Colette called out.
“Do you need our help?”

But **NOBODY** answered her.

We looked at one another, discouraged.
Just as we thought we were getting close, our
JOURNEY had ended. Or had it?

“**LOOK!** Straight ahead!” Pam cried,
pointing.

“It’s a tower!” Paulina said. “**A TOWER OF CLOUDS!**”

The tall **blue** tower rose from the clouds
in the far distance.

“It must be very tall, if we can see it from
here,” Will reasoned.

“**Shhh!**” Paulina interrupted. “I hear the
crying again.”

We **hurried** toward the tower, and the
crying got louder with each step we took. It
was very clear that the crying and the tower



were **connected**. But how?

When we arrived at the tower, we realized that Will's guess was correct. The tower was **impossibly** high. And there didn't seem to be a door at the bottom, just a window all the way at the top.

We were searching the base of the tower for some kind of entrance when **DROPS** started falling from above. Nicky collected one in her paw and sniffed it.

"It smells like salt water," she said. "Wait, could these be **tears**?" 

"Oh no!" said Colette. "The poor, sad soul is **TRAPPED** in the top of the tower! We must find a way inside."

"Let's **circle** the tower and see if we're missing something," Will suggested.

We walked around the whole base of the building, feeling it with our paws, but we



could not find an **ENTRANCE**.

“Hmm. Maybe the entrance is under the clouds somewhere,” I guessed.

Will looked up. “Well, we know for sure that the **WINDOW** is a way in. Here’s what I’m thinking. Let’s split up. I will climb the tower with Colette, Paulina, and Pam.”

I nodded. “And Nicky, Violet, and I will see what we can find beneath the clouds.”

Will still had some ropes and **climbing gear** in his backpack. While Violet, Nicky, and I searched through the clouds for some way into the tower, Will and the others prepared for the climb.

SURPRISINGLY, climbing the tower was easier than they thought. The clouds were strangely firm and allowed them to **grip** with their paws and shoes as they climbed.

Will cheered on his team. “You’re doing

great! **We're halfway there!**"

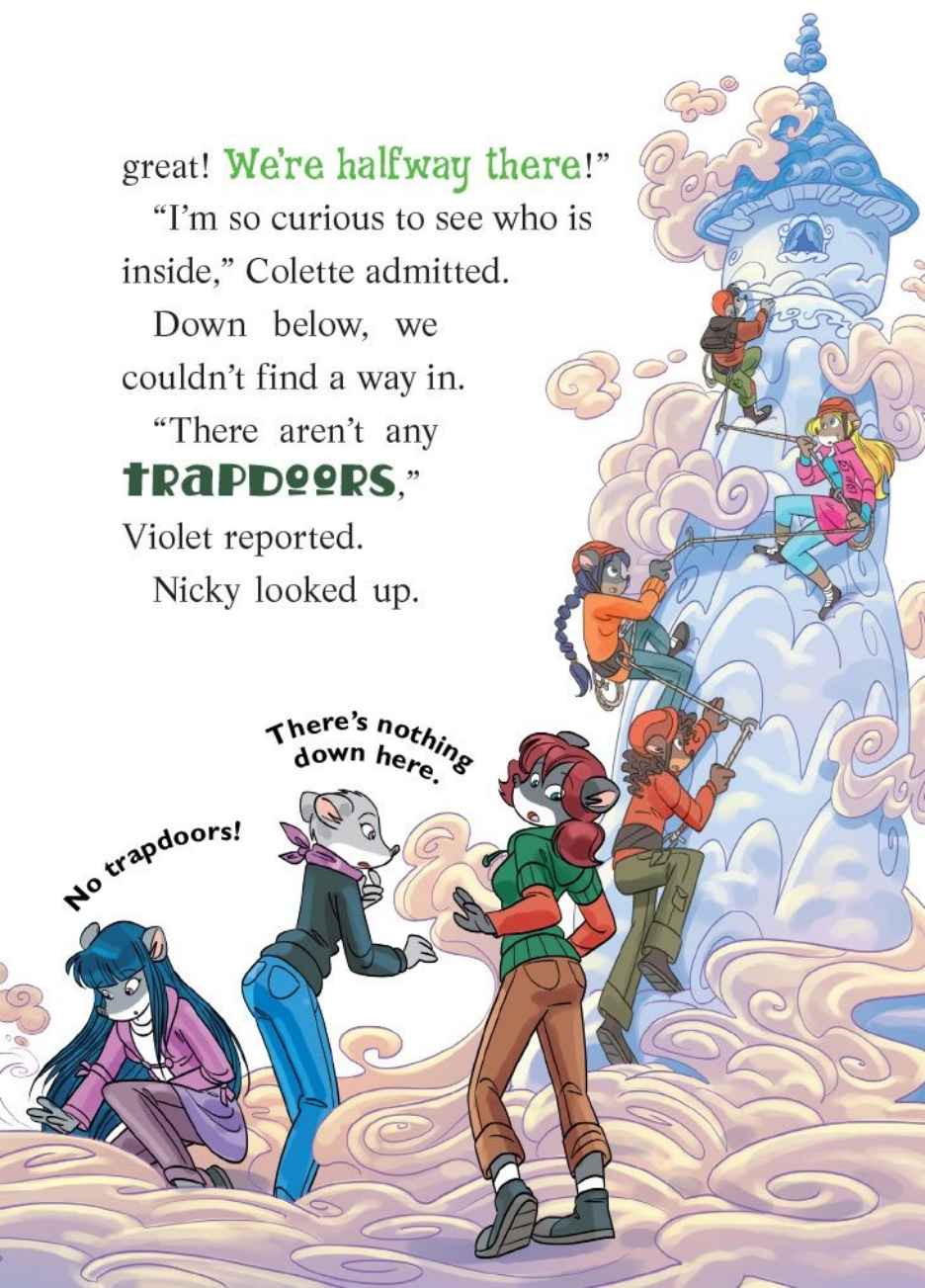
"I'm so curious to see who is inside," Colette admitted.

Down below, we couldn't find a way in.

"There aren't any **trapdoors**,"

Violet reported.

Nicky looked up.



No trapdoors!

There's nothing
down here.



“I hope they have better luck than we’re having!”

I followed her gaze. Will, Colette, Pam, and Paulina had **REACHED** the window!

Will told me later exactly what happened when they climbed inside the tower. They entered a **circular room** made of clouds: the walls, the fireplace, even the four-poster bed. The white clouds were tinged with **pale yellow** and **blue**.

In front of the fireplace stood a fairy with long **red hair**. She was quite beautiful, but she had the **saddest** look on her face. Will and the others were certain: they had found the **crying** creature!



Oooh!

Oh!



THE STORY OF ARIETTE

Will, Colette, Pam, and Paulina did not speak for a few moments. They stared at the fairy in the tower room, *enchanted* by her beauty and sadness.

She was the one who spoke first.

“I am *happy* to see you, strangers,” she said in a voice that was as sweet as the sound of a *flute* or the song of a *spring bird*.

“We heard your cries, and we couldn’t ignore them,” Will said gallantly.

“Yes,” said Colette. “We want to help you.”

The fairy nodded. “You were very *courageous* to climb all the way up here.”

Then she gave a little bow. “I should introduce myself. My name is *Ariette* and I



am a **Weaver Fairy.**"

"A Weaver Fairy? Does that mean you can make **clouds**?" asked Pam, remembering what they had learned back at the unit headquarters.

"Yes," said Ariette. "At least, I used to be able to make clouds." She **sighed** and sat down.

"Why can't you now? What happened?" Will asked.

"It is a very **sad** story," she replied. "Would you like to hear it?"

"Certainly," said Will. "Once we hear it, we can figure out how to **help** you."





“Thank you, you are truly **kind**,” said Ariette. “But I don’t know your names.”

“Of course! I’m sorry,” Will said. “My name is **Will Mystery** and I’m a researcher.”

“And we’re **Colette**, **PAm**, and **PAULINA**,” Colette said, pointing to her friends. “We’re colleagues of Will’s, and we go to Mouseford Academy.”

“I’m afraid I’ve never heard of it,” Ariette said.

“It’s located in the **REAL WORLD**,” Paulina explained. “Very far from here.”

Ariette’s eyes **LIT UP**. “I know of the real world,” she said. “Please tell me, what do you research?”

“We study the worlds of **fantasy** and solve mysteries there,” Will replied.

“And is that why you are here in the **Land**



of Clouds?” the fairy asked.

Colette nodded. “We know that the Weaver Fairies have stopped making clouds. We’re here to find out what happened.”

A **SHADOW** crossed Ariette’s face. “That is why I’ve been locked up in this tower.”

“What do you mean?” Will asked.

“Well, it is believed that the reason the Weaver Fairies don’t weave anymore is that they no longer **dream**,” Ariette replied.

Will nodded. “Yes, we read that the **silver threads** that make the clouds are produced when Weaver Fairies dream,” he said. “But why aren’t you dreaming anymore?”

“The others blame me,” Ariette said sadly. “They say that I **disturbed** the sleep of my fairy friends by telling them about the **WORLD BELOW**.”

“The World Below?” Paulina asked.



“That is what all Cloud Fairies call the world that exists **BELOW THE SKY** — the real world, as you call it,” Ariette explained.

Pam was confused. “What did you tell the other fairies about the real world that **STOPPED** them from dreaming?”

“I told them nothing that would have disturbed their dreams,” Ariette insisted. “I only told them about the many **wonders** of your world. But I broke our **RULE** that Weaver Fairies may never know about the World Below.”

“Why not?” Colette asked.

“So that we can **concentrate** on our work,” the fairy explained. “Weaver Fairies must only focus on weaving the clouds. And we **cannot pass** beyond the boundaries of the Land of Clouds.”

Paulina nodded. “So you must have been



very **curious** about the World Below.”

“Yes, very curious,” Ariette said. “That’s why I was punished and **IMPRISONED** in this tower.”

“Who imprisoned you?” Will asked.

“Queen Nephele,” Ariette replied. “She is very worried. If the fairies don’t start weaving clouds soon, the Land of Clouds will **disappear!**”





Paulina **frowned**. “But if you are not the reason why the Weaver Fairies are not **dreaming**, then what is?”

“I am not sure,” Ariette admitted. “But I think I know a way to **FIND OUT**.”

“How?” Pam asked.

“I am the only fairy who can **SEE** the dreams of the other weavers,” Ariette explained. “If I manage to find out what is really disturbing them, I’ll also find out what created this **situation**.”

“And then you could also prove your **innocence**!” said Colette.

“Yes, but to do that . . .” Paulina began.

“**I have to get out of here!**” Ariette cried.



THE CRYSTALS OF THE FAIRIES

Colette looked around. “Have you ever tried to **escape**?”

“It’s not that simple,” Ariette replied. “Each of the Weaver Fairies possesses a special pendant with a very **BRIGHT CRYSTAL**.”

“That sounds beautiful,” Colette remarked.

“They are quite **beautiful** to look at,” Ariette said. “But even more beautiful is their meaning. Inside each **PENDANT** is a picture that represents the nature of the fairy who wears it. Mine





has a picture of a **heart**.”

“What does the heart represent?” asked Paulina.

Ariette smiled. “I am very **sensitive** to the feelings of others.”

“That’s an important quality,” said Will.

“But what does your pendant have to do with being **IMPRISONED** in the tower?” Paulina asked.

“The pendant was taken away from me when I was imprisoned,” Ariette explained. “I am unable to move around the **Land of Clouds** without it.”

“Why not?” Pam asked.

“The crystal contains my **spirit**, the core of who I am,” Ariette said. “Without my crystal, I am **powerless** and weak. I am just a **SHADOW** of the fairy I once was.”

“That is so **sad**,” said Colette. “Isn’t there



anything we can do to help you?”

“Yes, there is,” said Ariette. “You could help me get back my **PENDANT**.”

Paulina was listening thoughtfully. “If **Queen Nephele** took it from you, is the pendant in the Cloud Castle now?”

“No, it is guarded by the **Color Pixies**,” Ariette replied. “They’re always happy and **joking** around, so much that it is difficult to know when they’re actually being **SERIOUS**.”

“So getting the pendant should be pretty **easy**, then,” said Pam.

Ariette shook her head. “For some reason, the Color Pixies have grown very **suspicious** lately. They don’t let anyone into their village anymore.”

“We’ll just tell them we’re there to get your **CRYSTAL**,” said Colette.



“They won’t trust you,” Ariette insisted. “And you shouldn’t even mention the crystal. If you can, find out where it is and then **sneak away** with it.”

Will was surprised. “You want us to steal it?”

Ariette sighed. “I’m afraid that is the only way. According to the queen, I am a **CRIMINAL**. The only way I can prove my **innocence** is to get the crystal back so I can travel to the Weaver Fairies and see their dreams. And that is the only way to save the Land of Clouds. You **believe** me, don’t you?”

Will, Colette, Pam, and Paulina looked at one another. They had met other **beautiful** fairies before who were not so nice inside. They had no reason to trust her — but there was something **special** about Ariette,

You want us to
steal the crystal?





and they all felt it.

Will turned to Ariette and nodded. "Very well. We will help you."

"I am very grateful," said Ariette. "When you return with the **CRYSTAL**, I will help you reach the Cloud Castle. Then we can work together to solve the **Mystery** of the fairies' dreams."

"Where can we find the **Color Pixies**?" asked Pam.

"They live in Fairywing Village, a small town not far from here," Ariette replied. "To get there, you must follow the **color clouds**. You will know Fairywing Village as soon as you see it. The village is made of clouds in every color of the **rainbow**."

"How pretty!" said Colette. "But how will we get into the village if you say the pixies won't let anyone in?"



“There is one way to gain their **TRUST**,” answered Ariette. “You must make them laugh! The Color Pixies love to **laugh**. If you can tell them a **FUNNY JOKE**, they quickly become **friendly** and trusting.”

“That will be an interesting challenge,” observed Paulina.

“I’m sure we can do it,” Will said confidently.

“We should get going,” said Colette. “Thea and the others will be waiting for us.”

“There are **more** of you?” Ariette asked.

“There are seven of us all together,” Paulina replied.

“**Wonderful! Together you will be stronger!**” the fairy said, smiling.

Then the mice said good-bye to Ariette and made their way down the tower.



THE CLOUD TUNNEL

“What a **sad** story. Poor Ariette,” remarked Violet after Will told us the story of the tower’s fairy prisoner.

“What do you think, Thea?” Will asked.

“Did she seem **sincere**?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Will.

“Although she could have been lying to get back her **CRYSTAL**,” added Colette.

“But we all felt there was something very truthful about her,” said Pam. “And she might be the only one who can help us find out what is happening to the **Weaver Fairies**.”

“Then we must find Fairywing Village!” I said, and we set off to find the **color clouds**.



Let's go!

Oh!



We looked at the clouds ahead of us as we walked.

“There’s a **yellow** one!”
Paulina said, pointing.



“And I see a
blue and a **pink** one,” added
Colette.

“Let’s be quick,
then, before they float
away!” Will said.



We stepped on the **puffy** clouds. It
was almost like following a path of stepping-
stones, except these felt like **balloons**
under our feet.

The **color clouds** led us to a hill made of
white, fluffy clouds.

Will frowned. “Ariette didn’t mention this.”

“Maybe the path continues on the other
side,” I guessed.



“Then let’s climb over the hill,” Will said.

“We already climbed up the tower. It shouldn’t be too **difficult**,” Paulina said, and she took the first step on the hill.

As soon as she set her foot down, the clouds turned **PURPLE** and rumbled. Then they **shook violently**, and Paulina toppled over.

Nicky ran to her. “Are you hurt?”

“I’m fine,” Paulina replied. “Luckily, the clouds are **soft**.”





The clouds making up the hill had turned white again.

“Let me try,” said Will, but as soon as he began to climb, the clouds turned dark again and **trembled**, sending him **TUMBLING** backward.

“Maybe we should try going around the hill,” I suggested.

We agreed that was the best thing to do. We hadn’t gone far when Nicky pointed.

“Look! A **TUNNEL**!” she cried.

There was an opening in the clouds at the bottom of the hill. Near the opening was a sign.

“**CLOUD TUNNEL**,” read Paulina. “How **mysterious**!”

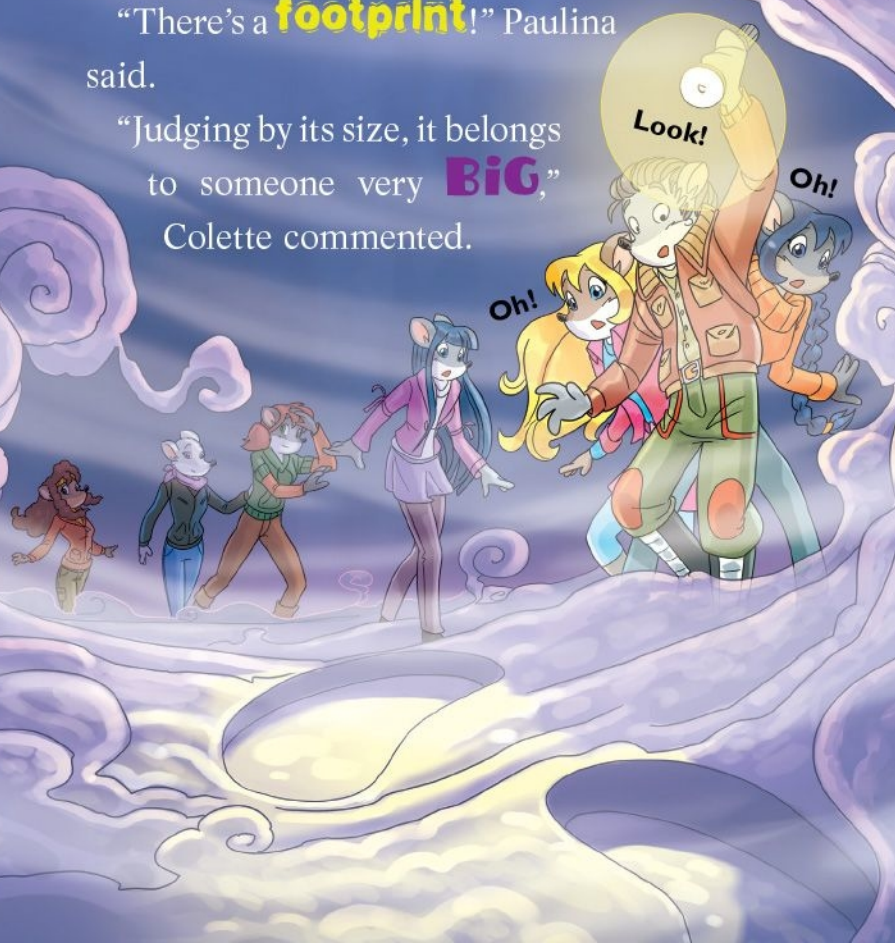
It was extremely



foggy inside the tunnel. Will produced a flashlight from his backpack and pointed it in front of him.

“There’s a **footprint!**” Paulina said.

“Judging by its size, it belongs to someone very **BiG**,” Colette commented.

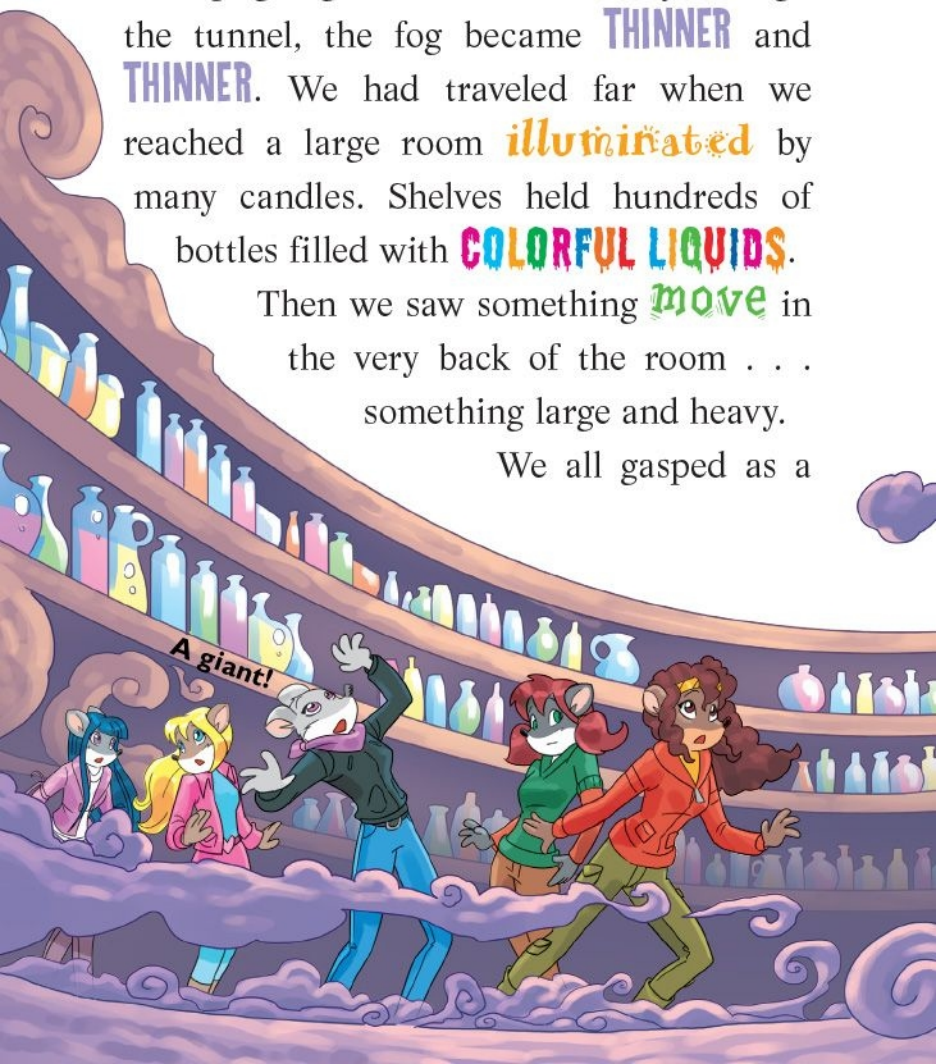




That very large footprint worried me, but we kept going. As we made our way through the tunnel, the fog became **THINNER** and **THINNER**. We had traveled far when we reached a large room **illuminated** by many candles. Shelves held hundreds of bottles filled with **COLORFUL LIQUIDS**.

Then we saw something **move** in the very back of the room . . . something large and heavy.

We all gasped as a





GIANT stepped toward us! He had so many arms that we couldn't count them!

Who are you?





THE HUNDRED-HANDED GIANT

The giant moved toward us, waving his many hands. Each one held a **BOTTLE** of colorful liquid.

“Who goes there?” he thundered.

“We are researchers,” Will answered.

“Why have you come to my house?” the giant asked.

“We did not mean to **disturb** you,” Will said. “We didn’t know you lived here.”

“Everyone in the land knows that!” boomed the giant. “I am the **Hundred-Handed Giant**. Where are you from?”

“From the World Below,” Colette called out. The giant looked interested.

“I was in the **WORLD BELOW** a long, long



time ago,” he said.

As he spoke, we heard the sound of **BREAKING GLASS**. One of the bottles had broken in the giant’s hand. He rushed to take another from a shelf.

“How long have you lived here?” Will asked.

“I do not know,” the **GIANT** replied. “Here, time does not pass. And I am condemned to always keep my hands occupied. I cannot **rest** for a single moment.”

“Is that why you’re holding a bottle in every hand?” I asked.

The giant nodded. “Yes. Once, I traveled to a faraway land. I was young and arrogant then, and when I came across an ugly **WITCH** I laughed in her face. So she **punished** me by giving me a hundred hands.”

“How cruel!” said Colette.



“She taught me a **lesson** that appearances do not matter, and I have learned it,” said the giant.

“But why must your hands always be **occupied**?” Paulina wondered.

“It is part of the **curse**,” said the giant sadly. “My hands must always be doing something, or I shall die. So I **constantly** empty and refill these bottles.”

“That is awful,” said Colette. “I wish we could stay and keep you company.”

“Yes, but we have a very important **assignment**,” added Will. “The Weaver Fairies are no longer making clouds. If we don’t find out why this is happening, the **Land of Clouds** will disappear.”





The giant frowned. "I did not know this. I never venture outside my tunnel. But if it's true that the Land of Clouds is in **DANGER**, then I will help you."

"Thank you," said Colette. "You are very kind."

"**K**indness is another lesson I have learned," the giant said with a smile.

"Do you know the way to **Fairywing Village**?" asked Will.

"I can point out the road to



Do you know the way
to Fairywing Village?

Thanks!

How kind!





you, but I can't go with you," the giant said. "First you must pass through the **VALLEY OF INFINITE STORM CLOUDS.**"

"That sounds **DANGEROUS,**" said Pam.

"The valley is swept by very strong winds that bring storm clouds with them," the giant explained. "These clouds create the Scarlet River, which is very difficult to cross. The **SCARLET LIGHTNING FAIRIES** live in the river, and they do not like strangers. You must be **careful.**"

"We will be," I promised.

The giant led us to the end of the tunnel. We said good-bye to him, and before long, we came to a valley of **ANGRY RED CLOUDS.** We walked to the edge and looked down into the swirling storm clouds.

IT WAS TRULY TERRIFYING!



THE SCARLET LIGHTNING FAIRIES

“Do we really have to climb down there?” Violet asked **nervously**, looking out over the Valley of Infinite Storm Clouds.

“I’m afraid so, if we want to reach Fairywing Village,” I replied.

“How will we cross the Scarlet River?” Paulina asked, looking down at the river of clouds. “It’s moving awfully **quickly**.”

Will looked thoughtful. “Maybe there is a way to stop it. Like another **RIDDLE**.”

“We can ask the Scarlet Lightning Fairies,” Colette said.

Dressed in bright red, the **SCARLET LIGHTNING FAIRIES** flew above the river, sprinkling dust on the storm clouds.



Whoooosh!

That's astounding!

Hmm...







“They don’t look **friendly**,” Nicky remarked. “But I guess we have to try.”

With a nod, Will set off down the **SLOPING** valley of clouds. As we followed him, the **WIND** became more intense.

“Hang on tight!” I called out. Just one **STRONG GUST** of wind could send any one of us falling into the river below!

We finally made it down to the riverbank.

Suddenly, two Scarlet Lightning Fairies **swooped** down from above. They looked **ANGRY**, but they were beautiful, and I marveled at their hair. It was deep red and **WILD** and **wavy**, like the storm clouds.

“Who are you?” asked the first fairy.

“We don’t want **INTRUDERS** in our valley,” said the second.

“We are here to help the Land of Clouds,”



I said as **sweetly** as I could.

“YOU MUST LEAVE,” the first fairy snapped. “You cannot stay.”

“Please, fairies, we just want to pass through,” said Colette.

“NO!” the second fairy said firmly.

“But we are on a **very important** mission,”

Will pleaded. “We come from the World Below, and we saw that your land is in **trouble**.

There is no time to waste!”

“We said no!” the first fairy cried.

As she spoke, a
**JAGGED BOLT
OF LIGHTNING**





fell from the sky and hit the clouds right next to us!

“Hey! Are you trying to hurt us?” Pam asked.

“That was not us!” the second fairy said with a huff. “It is the clouds. They are too **small** and **weak** to hold an **electrical charge** these days.”

“It’s no fun making lightning when the clouds can’t hold it!” added the first fairy.

“That’s why we’re here,” Colette said.

Then another **LIGHTNING BOLT** fell from the clouds. It singed the first fairy!

Ouch!



“**OUCH!**” she yelped.

“If you want to stop this from happening, then please let us pass,” Colette continued. “The reason the



clouds are **small** and **weak** is that the Weaver Fairies aren't producing any new ones!"

"What would you **know** about the Land of Clouds?" the second fairy asked with a scoff.

"We **research** fantasy worlds, and we think we know how to help," said Will.

But the fairies just shook their heads. The first fairy raised her arms to the sky. Immediately, a **GUST OF WIND** blew down and she shaped it in her hands.

We watched, **amazed**, as the wind in the fairy's hands became a sphere. It grew **BIGGER** and **BIGGER**. Once it was the size of a large cheese ball, she got ready to throw it at us.

"Go away!" she shouted.

Just then, another bolt of lightning **flashed** behind her. Startled, she dropped



the ball of wind and it **ORIFTEO** away.

“I think I can help you with this lightning,” Paulina said.

“You’ve already said that,” the fairy sneered.

“No, this is **different**,” said Paulina. “I can show you how to **CONTROL** the power of the lightning, so the clouds will hold their charge.”

“Really?” the two fairies asked together.

We all looked at Paulina, impressed. But, of course, she’s a real **SCIENCE WHIZ**, so I wasn’t surprised.

“I just need to do a small **calculation**,” Paulina replied. “I will write it down for you, with one condition.”

“What’s that?” the fairies asked.

“That you let us **PASS** to the other side of the valley,” replied Paulina.



“Do you know what you are asking?” the first fairy said. “That would mean **STOPPING** the Scarlet River, and we cannot.”

“Never mind, then,” Paulina replied.

The fairies flew toward each other and began to talk in **whispers**.

“Do you really know how to do that **calculation**?” Pam asked Paulina.

Paulina nodded. “I’ve never done it before, but I think I can.”

“And what if something goes **wrong**?” Violet asked.

“I have **faith** in Paulina,” Will said, and she smiled at the compliment.

A moment later, the two fairies flew back.

“We accept your proposal,” said the first. “Too many of us have had **trouble** with lightning lately. But if your calculation does not work, you will not pass.”



“That is fair,” Paulina agreed.

“You will test this at the place where we gather **THUNDERCLOUDS**,” the second fairy said, and the two fairies called down the wind again. They shaped it into a large sphere. It floated to Paulina and wrapped around her like a **BIG BUBBLE**.

I held my breath as I watched the bubble lift Paulina up **higher** and **higher** above us. She waved to us from inside.

“I hope that bubble doesn’t **BREAK**,” said Violet anxiously.

“These fairies might be cranky, but I think their **magic** is strong,” said Nicky.

“I’m just impressed that Paulina can attempt such a difficult calculation,” Colette said.

“That’s the beauty of the **THEA SISTERS**,” said Pam. “Each of us has a **different**



talent. So no matter what situation we're up against, we can always succeed."

"At least, we hope so!" Nicky joked.

We all looked up at Paulina. The entire **MISSION** was riding on the shoulders of our **BRAVE** friend!





A WORLD OF COLOR!

While we waited for Paulina to return, we stared at the **Scarlet River** at the bottom of the valley.

“Look! *The river has stopped running!*” Nicky cried.

“Paulina did it!” Pam cheered.

A moment later the wind sphere **Floated** back down to us, accompanied by the two fairies. Paulina was *smiling* as she stepped out of the sphere.

“I am so **PROUD** of you!” I cried, giving her a hug.

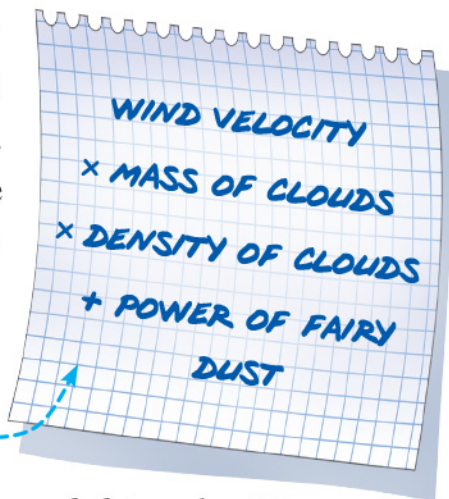
She smiled. “Thank you, Thea.”

“**GOOD JOB!**” Will added, and Paulina beamed.



“How did you manage to figure out how to control the lightning?” Violet asked.

“I needed to create a **formula** to combine the velocity of the wind, the density of the clouds, and the power of the fairy dust,” Paulina began, showing us the **notes** she had made.



“How do you determine the power of fairy dust?” Violet asked. “It’s a **magical** element.”

Paulina nodded. “That’s exactly why it was so **TRICKY**. But it has properties similar to —”

“**No need to explain!**” Colette interrupted, smiling. “We’re just happy you did it!”



The Scarlet Lightning Fairies looked happy as well.

“We thank you,” the first fairy said. “Now we can give the right amount of **fairy dust** to each cloud.”



“And we won’t get hit by lightning bolts anymore!” added the second.

“You will always be **welcome** in the Valley of Infinite Storm Clouds,” the first fairy said. The two fairies bowed. “Now you may pass.”



“Can you point the **WAY** to Fairywing Village?” Will asked.

“Cross the valley and then go straight,” the first fairy told him.

“Safe travels,” said the second fairy. “We truly hope you can set things right in the **Land of Clouds**.”

“We will do our best,” Will promised.

We safely crossed the Scarlet River, climbed up the other side of the valley, and walked **STRAIGHT AHEAD**. We kept our eyes open for signs of Fairywing Village.

After a few minutes, I noticed something.

“I think I see a color cloud over there,” I said, pointing. “Like the ones that marked the way before the **Cloud Tunnel**.”

“I see it, too!” Colette said. “We’re on the right path.”

Soon, Fairywing Village came into view.

Look, color clouds!







The pretty **color clouds** had little cloud houses on top of them in shades of **Pink**, **YELLOW**, **GREEN**, **BLUE**, and **PURPLE**.

"How cute!" Colette cried.

"But I don't see any pixies," Violet observed.

We looked around, hoping to spot someone who could help us, when Pam sneezed.

"ACHOOOOO!"

"Are you catching a cold?" Violet asked.

Before Pam could reply, we heard the sound of stifled **giggles**.

Then three pixies peeked out from behind a cloud and **smiled** at us. They **fluttered** their transparent wings and flew toward us.

The first was dressed in **BLUE**, the second in **Pink**, and the third in **PURPLE**. Each one carried a bucket of **PAINT**.

"Good day, **Color Pixies**," Colette said.

"Good day, dear," replied the blue pixie.



“We are Rosebud, Bluebell, and Lilac. Who are you?” asked the pink fairy.

We introduced ourselves, and Lilac frowned. “We do not allow **strangers** here.”

“We have a **very important** reason for our visit . . .” I tried to explain.

Rosebud shook her head. “I’m sorry, we can’t make any exceptions!”

Meanwhile, Lilac had begun to paint a **cloud**.

“You paint so well,” Violet said. “May I try?”

“Certainly,” said Lilac, and she handed the **PAINTBRUSH** to her.

Violet painted a **marvelous flower** on the delicate surface of the cloud.





“It’s an orchid, my favorite flower,” Violet explained.

“You are very good at **painting**,” said Rosebud.

“Not as good as you, kind pixies,” Violet said.

The fairies smiled at the compliment. “Thank you,” said Bluebell. “We paint from **sunrise** to **sunset**, coloring the clouds.”

They smiled again, and we remembered what Ariette had told us: if we made them **laugh**, they would let us enter the village.

“Would you like to hear a **funny joke**?” Nicky asked. “I know a good one.”

The three fairies clapped their hands together. “**Yes, please!** Tell us a joke!”

“Okay,” said Nicky. “What’s worse than finding a **worm** in your **apple**?”



“I don’t know. What?” asked Rosebud.

“Finding half a worm!” Nicky said, and the fairies **giggled**.

“Tell us another one!” said Bluebell.

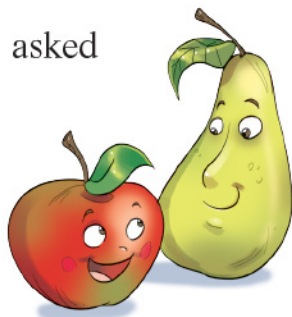
“Okay,” said Nicky. “What kind of **fruit** do twins like best?”

“What kind?” asked Bluebell.

“**PEARS!**” Nicky said, and the fairies giggled again.

“One more! One more!” pleaded Lilac.

Nicky thought. “Okay, here’s a funny color riddle for you,” she said. “A one-story house is painted **PURPLE**. The walls are **PURPLE**. The floors are **PURPLE**. The furniture is **PURPLE**. The ceilings are **PURPLE**. What color are the stairs?”





“**PURPLE?**” Lilac guessed.

Nicky grinned. “There are no stairs! It’s a one-story house!”

The three fairies started laughing so hard that they **somersaulted** in the air.

“Your jokes have put us in such a **GOOD MOOD**,” Rosebud announced.

“And when we are in a good mood, we like having guests for **tea**,” Lilac added.

“Would you like to visit our homes?” Bluebell asked.

“We’d be **delighted**!” Will replied.

“Follow us!” Rosebud said.

We stepped along a path of **color clouds**, following the flying fairies.

“Good job, Nicky,” I whispered to her. I was so **PROUD** of my student.



SMILE CAKES

As we walked through the village, we passed the **cute** little houses perched on color clouds. From their chimneys came the delicious **aroma** of desserts baking.

“What a wonderful place!” Violet said, looking around.

“Fairies of **all different colors** live in our village,” Lilac explained. “Each one of us has a paintbrush and a palette that we use to **PAINT** the clouds.”

The three fairies led us to a **Pale Blue** house that I guessed was Bluebell’s.

“You are **lucky** to live in such a pretty village,” Colette remarked.

Bluebell nodded. “Once, this was a very

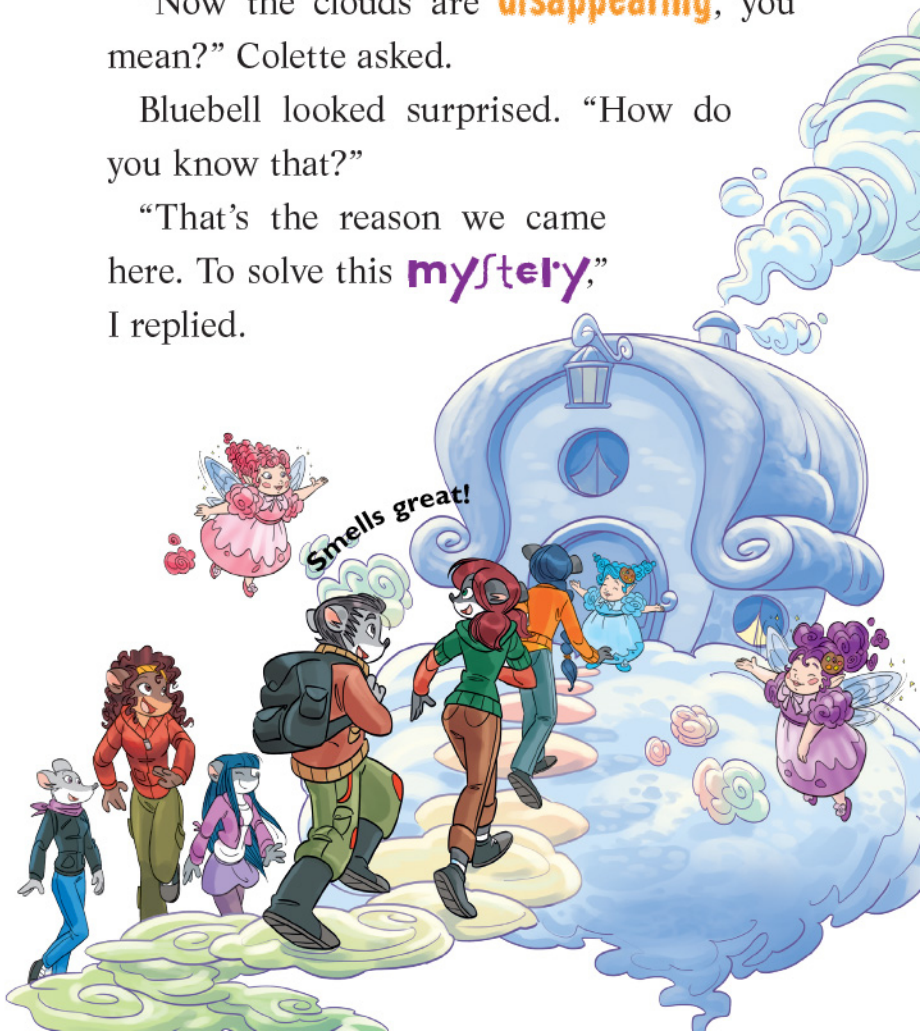


happy place, full of laughter and joy,” she said. “But now . . .”

“Now the clouds are **disappearing**, you mean?” Colette asked.

Bluebell looked surprised. “How do you know that?”

“That’s the reason we came here. To solve this **mystery**,” I replied.





The three fairies looked at one another, confused, but then Bluebell's eyes got wide.

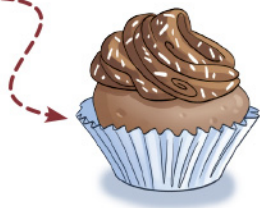
“**Goodness! My cupcakes!**” she cried, and then she rushed into her house.

A moment later she flew back out. “I thought I had left them in the oven for too long! But they're **perfect**. Please, come in!”

In the center of Bluebell's tiny house was a round table laden with cupcakes.

“The **smile cakes** that Bluebell makes are famous throughout the village,” Rosebud told us.

We took our seats around the table and each took a cupcake.



“These are **delicious!**” Pam exclaimed, biting into a chocolate cupcake decorated with **colored sprinkles**.

“I'm **happy** you like them,” Bluebell said



with a satisfied smile. “Now that there aren’t any new clouds to paint, we have to find other ways to keep **busy**.”

“We’re here to find out what is happening to the clouds,” Will said. “We want to **SOLVE** the problem and save the land.”

“But nobody knows how to make the Weaver Fairies **dream** again,” Lilac pointed out.

“Well, maybe the reason that the Weaver Fairies aren’t making **silver thread** isn’t what you think,” Colette suggested.

Lilac got **annoyed**. “Oh, really? Do you know better than Queen Nephele?”

“Well, not even she knows the real reason,” Will said. “There is only one fairy who can **truly** find out.”

“And who might that be?” Rosebud asked.

“**Ariette, the Weaver Fairy**,” Will said.



The fairies' eyes widened.

"Ariette? She is the cause of all this **trouble!**" Lilac protested.

"But Ariette is the only one who can see the dreams of the *Weaver Fairies*," Paulina broke in. "Maybe the fairies are still





dreaming, but what they are dreaming is keeping them from weaving. We need to understand what is going on.”

“**Queen Nephele** and the Grand Council of Fairies have established the **GUILT** of Ariette according to the law. There is nothing more to say,” Bluebell said firmly.

“Please, Color Pixies, give us a chance to find out the **truth**,” Violet pleaded. “If Ariette were free, she could —”

“Free?” Rosebud interrupted angrily. “It’s out of the question. It would mean giving her back her **CRYSTAL PENDANT**.”

“And we know you’re guarding it here!” Pam blurted out.

Nicky nudged her, but it was too late. Our plan to **sneak off** with the crystal was exposed.

“So you’re here to steal Ariette’s crystal?!”



Bluebell asked **ANGRILY**.

Rosebud took out a silver whistle and blew into it three times. A moment later, we heard the strong beating of wings. We stepped outside and saw three majestic **winged unicorns!**



“They will take you to the Cloud Castle. **Queen Nephele** and the Grand Council of Fairies are waiting for you,” said Lilac **STERNLY**.

Will turned to us. “We may as well go to the palace. We may get more information there.”

We nodded in agreement, and then climbed onto the backs of the **unicorns**. They **soared** up high, whisking us away from Fairywing Village.



Good-bye!

How exciting!

I love unicorns!



INSIDE THE CLOUD CASTLE

I couldn't believe that we were flying on unicorns! It was amazing. Their long wings kept us steady even when heavy **GUSTS OF WIND** hit us. They rode the air currents, **FLYING SWIFTLY** toward the Cloud Castle.

"Do you think the **Grand Council of Fairies** will be angry with us?" Violet asked behind me.

"They might," I replied. "But I am counting on the wisdom of Queen Nephele. I hope that she will see the **TRUTH** once we explain our reasoning."

"And if she doesn't?" Violet asked.



“Then we’ll have to think of a **PLAN B**,” I replied. Though I didn’t exactly know what that would be.

“**LOOK UP AHEAD!**” Colette shouted.

An enormous palace came into view on the horizon: **the Cloud Castle!**





The unicorns landed in a large courtyard.

Seven guards in silver armor were lined up there, waiting for us. Two **winged fairies** stood in front of them. They were all looking at us severely.

“Welcome. We are the Sentinel Fairies, and these are the **Cloud Guards**,” explained the fairy with long red hair. “Follow us, please.”

The Cloud Guards led us inside the palace.

THE CLOUD CASTLE

1. Palace entrance
2. Fountain of Dreams
3. The Guards' Courtyard
4. The Fairies' Courtyard
5. The Queen's Courtyard
6. Throne Room
7. North Wing (royal quarters)
8. East Wing (Weaver Fairies' quarters)
9. South Wing (quarters for the Grand Council)
10. West Wing
11. Hall of Mirrors







Inside, we could see that the building was made of the woven threads of **clouds**.

“How elegant!” Colette exclaimed, looking at a **fancy** stuffed armchair.

“Those were just **created** today,” said the fairy with dark hair, pointing to the chairs.





“What do you mean, ‘created’?” Nicky asked.

“The cloud threads are **soft** and can be woven to create many different shapes,” explained the red-haired fairy. “Therefore, the furniture of the castle is constantly **CHANGING**, to always keep it as beautiful as possible.”

“And of course every fairy can change the **FURNISHINGS** of her own room as often as she wishes,” added the dark-haired fairy.

“I would love to do that back in our room at Mouseford!” Colette said with a **dreamy sigh**.

“You would change things every day!” Violet teased.

We reached a very tall door with two **LIGHTNING BOLTS** carved on it.

The dark-haired fairy turned to us. “Wait



here,” she instructed, and she went inside with her companion.

The **Cloud Guards** stayed behind with us. It was clear that they weren’t going to let us out of their sight for a moment.

A few minutes passed, and the fairy with dark hair returned.

“You may enter,” she said.

We found ourselves in a very **GRAND HALL** in the shape of a circle, with a row of benches around the room occupied by fairies. All of them wore **dark blue** dresses decorated with **tiny crystals**. On the throne, in the middle of the room, sat Queen Nephele. She wore a turquoise dress and a ***crown of stars*** on her head.

Hardly daring to breathe, we sat in seven seats facing the queen, waiting to be heard by the **Grand Council of Fairies**.



Welcome, strangers!

Thank you,
Your Majesty!

It is an honor!



THE GRAND COUNCIL OF FAIRIES

Queen Nephele broke the **deep silence** in the council room.

“Welcome to the Cloud Castle, strangers,” she said. “I am **Nephele**, Queen of the Land of Clouds, and this is the Grand Council of Fairies. I imagine that you **know** why you are here.”

“It’s an **honor** to be in your presence, Queen Nephele,” Will said. “We are here to help you.”

The queen looked at him questioningly. “What do you mean?”

A low murmur rose among the fairies in the council.



“We know that the **Weaver Fairies** aren’t weaving any more clouds,” Will said. “And we’re here to find out why.”

“You are late, strangers,” the queen said. “The truth is already known. It was this very council that **JUDGED** the guilty party and took the necessary actions.”

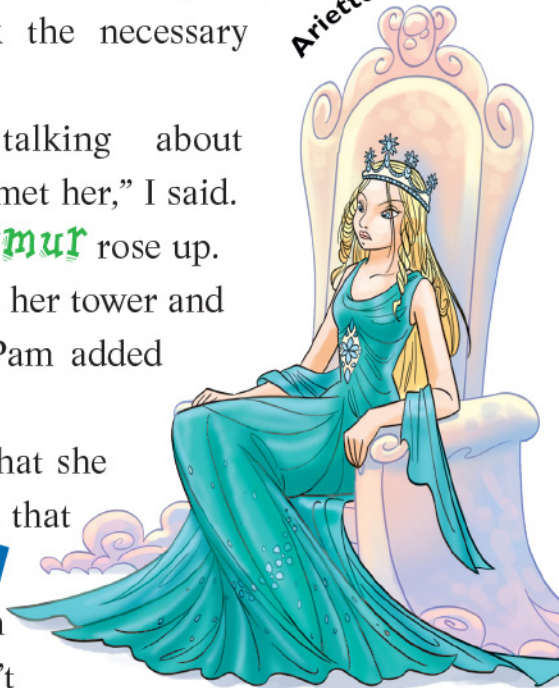
“If you’re talking about **Ariette**, we’ve met her,” I said.

Another **murmur** rose up.

“We went into her tower and spoke to her,” Pam added confidently.

“She told us that she is innocent, and that she can **FIND OUT** the reason the fairies aren’t

Ariette is guilty!





producing silver thread,” Colette said.

“**That’s absurd!**” fumed the queen. “She is guilty of describing the World Below to other fairies. That is against our **LAW**, and she was punished.”

“But we come from the World Below, and it is full of **wonders**,” Violet said.

The queen stared at us in **SHOCK**.

“Please **FREE** Ariette,” Paulina pleaded. “Punishing her has not solved the problem of the Weaver Fairies. And she is the only one who may be able to learn the **truth**.”

Queen Nephele shook her head. “No. Absolutely not. Ariette put our realm in **SERIOUS DANGER** and must stay in the tower. The Weaver Fairies will start weaving again soon, once they **forget** what she has told them.”

The fairy council nodded in agreement. Only one fairy **stood** and bravely



challenged the queen.

“My queen, I beg you. Listen to these strangers. They are telling the **truth** about Ariette,” she said.

“**Galatea!** We have already discussed this at length. The decision has been made,” Queen Nephele said.

Galatea lowered her gaze and sat down again.

The queen continued. “I order that these strangers be taken to the castle **library**. They will stay there, under the custody of the Cloud Guards, while they wait to be removed from our land and returned to the **WORLD BELOW**. I hereby declare this meeting **OVER**.”

The queen stood and left the





hall, and the council members followed her — except for **Galatea**. When the Cloud Guards approached us, she stopped them.

“I will accompany these strangers. Please go.”

They left, and Galatea led us to the library.

“So, you have seen my **friend** Ariette?” she asked.

“Yes,” said Will. “We were trying to find the Cloud Castle when we heard her **cries** from the tower.”



“Poor Ariette,” said the fairy. “I wish I could **help** her, but I don’t know how.”

“She told us she can’t leave the tower without her **CRYSTAL**,” Colette said.

Galatea nodded. “That is true. The crystal produces a **magic**





light that surrounds the fairy wearing it and allows her to move across the clouds.”

“It sounds beautiful,” said Colette.

Galatea grasped the **PENDANT** that she wore around her neck. “This is my crystal.”

“It’s so **sparkly**,” Violet said admiringly.

“Why is it against your laws to explore the World Below?” Pam asked.

“The reason is **fear**,” Galatea replied. “Queen Nephele and many of the fairies don’t know much about other worlds, and so they believe they must be dangerous.”

“But that’s not true,” Paulina said, shaking her head. “It is a **wonderful experience** to get to know new people and places.”

“I agree,” Galatea said. “But I think it will be a **long time** before the Grand Council of Fairies understands that.”

“That’s a shame,” said Colette.



Galatea sighed. “Meanwhile, Ariette is a **PRISONER**. I’m so worried about her.”

“Are you good friends?” Nicky asked.

“Yes. We are always together and **share** everything,” Galatea replied. “I know it’s not her fault that the Weaver Fairies are no longer producing **silver thread**.”

“Do you have any clue why it’s happening?” asked Will.

Galatea shook her head. “No. Ariette is the only one who can find out, if she can ever **LEAVE** that tower!”

“We tried to get her crystal back from the **Color Pixies**, but unfortunately we didn’t succeed,” I explained.

“There’s another way to free Ariette,” Galatea said. “But I can’t do it alone. Would you be willing to help me?”

“Absolutely!” we all replied.



A GESTURE OF THE HEART

We entered the Cloud Castle's library and *Galatea* closed the door firmly behind us. We were alone.

"What is **YOUR PLAN**?" Will asked.

The fairy slipped off the chain around her neck and handed it to Will. It was her **CRYSTAL**.

"Why did you take it off?" he asked her.

"So that you can take it to Ariette, and she will finally be **FREE**," Galatea said.





“But I thought that each fairy had her own special crystal,” said Will.

“That is true,” Galatea said. “Each crystal represents the **nature** of the fairy who wears it, and it is very personal to her. But it can be given from one fairy to another.”

“And it still maintains its **MAGIC POWER**?” Will asked.

Galatea nodded. “Yes.”

Paulina looked worried. “**But what will you do** without your crystal?”

“I will stay confined here,” Galatea replied. “I won’t be able to **fly** or leave the Cloud Castle. But I will gladly do it, because it’s the only way to help Ariette prove her **innocence**.”

“What a nice thing to do,” I commented.

“Ariette is my dear friend, and I love her very much,” said Galatea. “It is unjust that



she is a **PRISONER** in the tower.”

We nodded in agreement.

“And it is **important** to find out what is happening with the Weaver Fairies,” Galatea continued. “If they don’t start weaving clouds again soon, the Land of Clouds will be in **SERIOUS DANGER!**”

“You’re right. We’ll take the pendant to Ariette and **FREE** her as soon as possible,” Will said. He placed the pendant gently in Colette’s paw. “The tower is far away and will take us a long time to reach,” he continued. “Can you stay here long without your **CRYSTAL?**”

“The **unicorns** can take you to Ariette, and they are fast,” Galatea reminded him.

I also still had one worry about the plan.

“I think it would be better if you didn’t stay here **alone**,” I told Galatea. “Without



the power of your crystal, you could be in **DANGER**.”

“Especially if Queen Nephele finds out that you let us escape,” Paulina said. “She might get **ANGRY**.”

“Let’s split up into **two groups**,” Will said. “One will stay here at the castle with Galatea and try to make sure that Queen Nephele and the Grand Council do not suspect anything. The other group will go **FREE** Ariette, help her get back her **CRYSTAL** from Fairywing Village, and then bring her back to the palace.”

“If you all agree,” I proposed, “I will **stay here** at the palace with Pam and Violet.”

Everyone was happy with that plan.

Before we separated, we **hugged** one another tightly. Then Colette, Nicky, Paulina, and Will **flew away** on the magic unicorns.

Bye!

We're off!

See you soon!

Safe travels!

Be careful!





FINALLY FREE!

Will held on tightly to the unicorn's mane as they flew to Ariette's tower. He is a brave adventurer, but riding on the back of a **unicorn** made him nervous! Behind him, Paulina looked down on the Land of Clouds in **wonder**.

"There's Fairywing Village," she said. "And up ahead, I can see the Scarlet River!"

"It looks like a **beautiful** painting from up here!" Colette called out.

"I can see things that we didn't **notice** before," added Nicky, who was sitting in front of Colette. "There are cloud forests and cloud lakes down there, and all kinds of fairies!"



“It’s like we’re **flying through a dream**,” Paulina said.

“Yes,” agreed Will. “Fantasy worlds take us to **unforgettable** places. It’s one of the reasons why I love my work!”

They continued in silence, **enchanted** by the beauty surrounding them, until they finally saw the tower where Ariette was held.

“At least we don’t have to climb the tower this time,” Colette said. “But how will we get inside?”

“Let’s fly as close to the **WINDOW** as we can,” Will suggested.

Ariette heard their voices and ran to the window. “You came back!” she said, greeting her new friends with a **brilliant smile**.

“We’ve come to get you out of here,” Will told her.

“But the unicorns’ wings won’t let us get



any closer,” Nicky pointed out.

Colette took Galatea’s **CRYSTAL** from her pocket and looked at it thoughtfully.

“Try **putting it on**,” Will said.

Colette’s eyes widened. “Do you think it will make me **fly**? But I’m not a fairy.”

“It’s worth a try,” Nicky said.

Paulina turned to Will. “Do you think anything **BAD** could happen?”

“I don’t think so,” Will replied.

“And we’re **ready to help** if anything goes wrong.”





After a pause, Colette put the **CRYSTAL** around her neck.

Immediately, she sensed a change inside her. She felt incredibly light . . .

“You’re flying, Coco!” Paulina exclaimed.

“It’s true! I can’t believe it!” Colette cried as she floated off the unicorn’s back. It felt **amazing**! But she had to focus on the job at hand: helping Ariette.

She **FLEW** through the open window, landing next to the fairy.

“How did you do that?” Ariette asked.

“Thanks to this,” Colette said, showing her the **PENDANT**.

Ariette **gasped**. “But that’s Galatea’s crystal! Why do you have it? Did something happen to her?”

“No, she is fine,” Colette promised. “We



met her in the Cloud Castle, and she gave us the **CRYSTAL** to bring to you.”

Ariette’s pale eyes filled with **tears** when she heard this.



“Ariette! Why are you crying?” Colette asked.

“Galatea has a **heart of gold**,” she replied. “I don’t know any other fairies who would have done the same.”

“You are her **best friend**, and she would do anything to help you,” Colette said. “It’s thanks to her that we are here.”

“But why would she give me her crystal?” Ariette asked.

“We weren’t able to steal your **CRYSTAL** from the Color Pixies,” Colette explained. “She knew this was the only way to **FREE** you.”

Colette removed the necklace and handed

it to Ariette. The fairy put it around her neck, and it shone **brightly**. She happily **flapped** her wings.

“Let’s go! Grab my hand!” Ariette told Colette.

Colette obeyed, and she felt a lightness flow through her body again. Then she and Ariette flew out through the window.

“**You did it!**” Nicky cried.

“**Hooray!**” cheered Paulina.

Colette climbed back onto the **unicorn** with

Shall we go?



Take my hand!





Nicky, while Ariette thanked the others.

“Now let’s get back your crystal!” Will said.

“It’s still at **Fairywing Village**,” Paulina explained. “Things with the Color Pixies did not go well.”

“Colette told me,” Ariette said. “But I am not surprised. They are very **stubborn**.”

“As soon as we mentioned the crystal, they called the unicorns with a **silver whistle**, and the unicorns took us to the Cloud Castle,” Colette said.

Ariette nodded. “It’s a good thing you met **Galatea** there and she gave you her crystal.”

“And she helped us **escape**,” Will added. “Some of our friends stayed with her, to **protect her** in case Queen Nephele suspects anything.”

“You’ve done well,” said Ariette. “If the



queen were to find out what Galatea did, she would be **FURIOUS** and would severely punish her. But there's another reason we should worry."

Paulina frowned. "What?"

"The exchange of crystals between fairies can be **very risky**," Ariette replied. "As you know, each crystal represents the nature of the fairy who possesses it. If a fairy goes too long without her pendant, she will lose her **fairy powers** forever."

"That's **awful**!" Colette exclaimed.

"It may already be **TOO LATE** for me. I do not know," Ariette said sadly. "But I do not want the same thing to happen to Galatea."

"Then we must **HURRY**!" Will said.

Ariette beat her **wings** and flew off to Fairywing Village, and our friends followed her on the unicorns.



A STORM OF STARS

As they flew toward Fairywing Village, the sky began to **DARKEN**.

“I wonder what time it is,” Nicky said.

She looked at her watch, but the numbers on the face kept **appearing** and **disappearing**. This always happened in fantasy worlds: the **technology** of the real world stopped working.

“It will be **NIGHT** soon,” Ariette confirmed. “And that’s good for us, since it will be easier to avoid being seen.”

Then Ariette let out a **sigh**.

“What is it?” Will asked her. “You seem worried.”

“I am just sad that we have to **steal** the



crystal from the Color Pixies,” she said.
“They really are very **sweet** at heart.”

“That’s true,” replied Will. “But we are only doing it to **save** the Land of Clouds.”

“When it’s all over, I’m sure the pixies will understand,” Colette said. “After all, they’ll have plenty of clouds to **PAINT** again!”

Suddenly, a small **SHINING BALL** fell from the sky and hit Paulina on the head. As soon as it touched her hair, the sphere dissolved into a **spray of stars**.

“Oh!” Paulina cried.

“What happened?” Will asked.

But before she could answer, a shining ball hit him, too!

“It’s a **storm of stars**! We must find shelter!” Ariette cried.

The fairy dove for a low bank of clouds. The **unicorns** followed her.



“Quickly!” Ariette urged them.

Meanwhile, the **STARS** continued to fall, as thick as snowflakes during a **blizzard**.

Each time the stars hit something, they dissolved, leaving a **shining trail**. Luckily,





my friends reached the low clouds quickly.

Then Paulina realized something. “These aren’t clouds . . . they’re **flowers!**” she cried.

“Let’s go down farther,” said *Ariette*, pointing to some huge trumpet-shaped flowers. “They will give us cover.”

“Are the flowers **STRONG ENOUGH** to withstand the star shower?” Will asked.

“Yes, but we must be **very careful** around them,” Ariette said. “Some of these flowers





How strange ...

These flowers will
make us fall asleep!



may make us fall asleep,” she explained. “We are in Sleep Flower Woods, home of the **Sleep Fairies**. Only they know which flowers cause sleep.”

“The Sleep Fairies? What powers do they have?” Will asked.

“They collect pollen from certain flowers. Then they add the pollen to the **evening clouds**, and that pollen helps all of the fairies in our world **fall asleep**,” Ariette explained.

“That is amazing,” said Nicky.

“But dangerous for us,” said Ariette. “This star storm will **shake** the pollen loose from these flowers. So we can’t stay here for long.”

As she spoke, a star hit the flower over their heads. They **quickly** ran to another nearby flower before the pollen could fall.

“I hope this **star storm** ends soon,”



Will said, worriedly.

But more stars **STREAKED** down from the sky, and very quickly another star hit the flower above them. They all ran for cover once more, but there wasn't a flower close by that would protect all of them. Nicky and Colette took cover together, Will and Ariette found a flower, and Paulina ducked under a **PALE BLUE** flower.

ZAP! Another star hit it immediately, and before Paulina could run, grains of pollen **showered** her. Her eyes began to **droop** right away, and she slid to the ground like a rag doll.

"OH NO! PAULINA!" Will cried, racing to her side.

"She's falling asleep!" Colette said.

Paulina was resting in the big, **curled** leaf of the flower.



“WE MUST WAKE HER, quickly!” said Ariette.

At that moment, a **fairy** appeared from behind the flower stems. She was tall and slender, and wore a **large pink flower** hat on her head. She **smiled** silently.





THE LEGEND OF THE SLEEP FAIRIES

“Good evening, my dear guests,” said the fairy in a voice as **musical** as a lullaby.

“Good evening to you, Sleep Fairy,” Ariette replied.

“Oh, a **Weaver Fairy** in these woods. What a surprise!” the fairy marveled.

“We are in the middle of a difficult situation, Sleep Fairy,” Ariette said. “Our friend Paulina breathed in **pollen** from this **blue flower** and now she has fallen asleep.”

“Can you please help us **wake her up**?” Nicky asked.

The fairy shook her head. “I am sorry, but I can’t.”

“How long will she sleep for?” Colette asked.

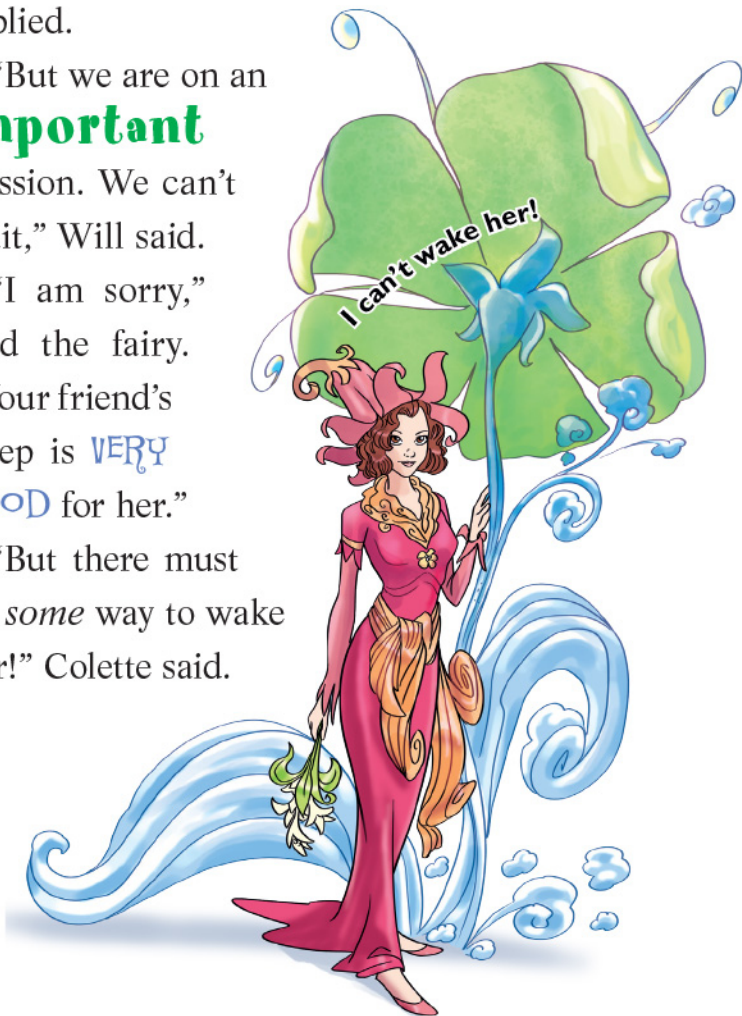


“She will wake up by herself, after having **dreamed** and **rested**,” the fairy replied.

“But we are on an **important** mission. We can’t wait,” Will said.

“I am sorry,” said the fairy. “Your friend’s sleep is **VERY GOOD** for her.”

“But there must be *some* way to wake her!” Colette said.





The fairy smiled. “You can try.”

Colette shook Paulina’s shoulder. “**Wake up!**” she said loudly. “It’s me, Colette. We have to go!”

But Paulina continued to sleep deeply.

Ariette looked up at the sky. “The **star storm** is passing. The way is clear to Fairywing Village. I’m afraid we must leave her here.”

“We can’t. I will **stay** with her,” Colette said.

Maybe the fairy felt sorry for them, because then she said, “Actually, there may be one way to **wake** your friend.”

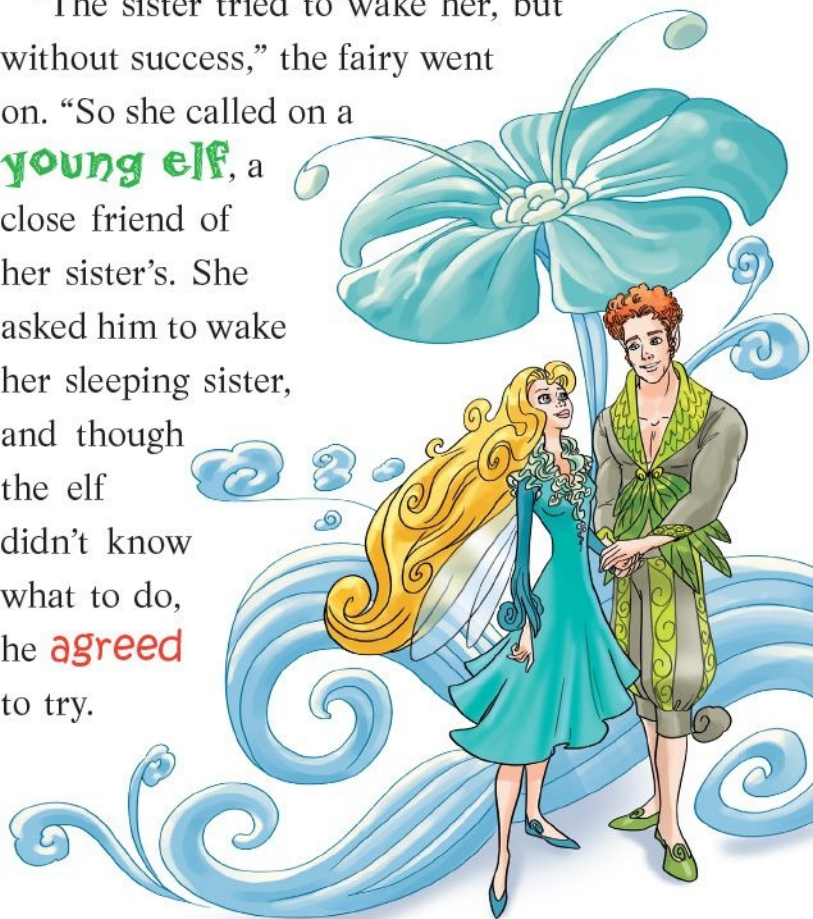
“What’s that?” Will asked.

“There is a **legend**,” the fairy began. “One night, a beautiful fairy fell asleep under a **blue flower** just like this one. She didn’t wake up the next day, or the next. When one



of her sisters realized she was missing, she went out to search for her and found her here, in the **Sleep Flower Woods**.

“The sister tried to wake her, but without success,” the fairy went on. “So she called on a **young elf**, a close friend of her sister’s. She asked him to wake her sleeping sister, and though the elf didn’t know what to do, he **agreed** to try.





So he knelt next to the fairy and kissed her hand — and the fairy opened her eyes!”

“What a **romantic** story!” Colette said.

“It is a **beautiful legend**,” said the Sleep Fairy, “and we believe that it may be based on truth, like all legends. Only a true and **pure affection** can awaken those fallen into a deep sleep.”

“Yes, but how does that help us?” Ariette asked.

Colette and Nicky looked at each other and **smiled**.

“We might have an **idea**,” Colette said.

“Maybe Will could try to re-create the legend,” said Nicky.

Will **blushed**. “Me? I don’t know if that will work.”

“You’re the closest thing we’ve got to an elf,” Colette said. “And you have a **STRONG**



CONNECTION with Paulina.”

Will nodded. “I’ll try.”

He knelt next to Paulina, picked up her paw, and gently kissed it. Nothing happened right away. But soon Paulina’s eyelids began to **flutter**! Very slowly, she opened her





eyes. Will quickly **let go** of her paw.

“Hooray!” Nicky cheered.

Paulina yawned. “What happened to me?”

“You fell **asleep**,” Ariette explained.

“A **deep, deep** sleep,” Colette added.

“But now you’re fine,” Will concluded.

“That’s all that matters.”

Paulina nodded. “Yes, I only remember that I was having a **good dream**.”

Her friends **smiled**.

“We must go,” Will urged them. Then he turned to the Sleep Fairy. **“THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.”**

“It was nothing,” the fairy said. “I only told you a story.”

Will, Paulina, Nicky, and Colette mounted the unicorns again. Then Ariette flew ahead, and they followed her to **Fairywing Village**.



THE RAINBOW MOTHS

Illuminated by the evening light, Fairywing Village was even more **enchanting** than Will, Colette, Paulina, and Nicky had remembered. When they got near the first **cloud houses**, Ariette stopped.

“We must be careful,” she warned. “To protect their village during the night, the Color Pixies ask the **Rainbow Moths** to help.”

“Who are they?” asked Will.

“They are creatures that are able to hear the smallest noise. When they sense danger, they release a **colorful substance** in the sky to alert the fairies,” Ariette explained.

“But if the fairies are **sleeping**, how do



they see the colors in the sky?” Paulina asked.

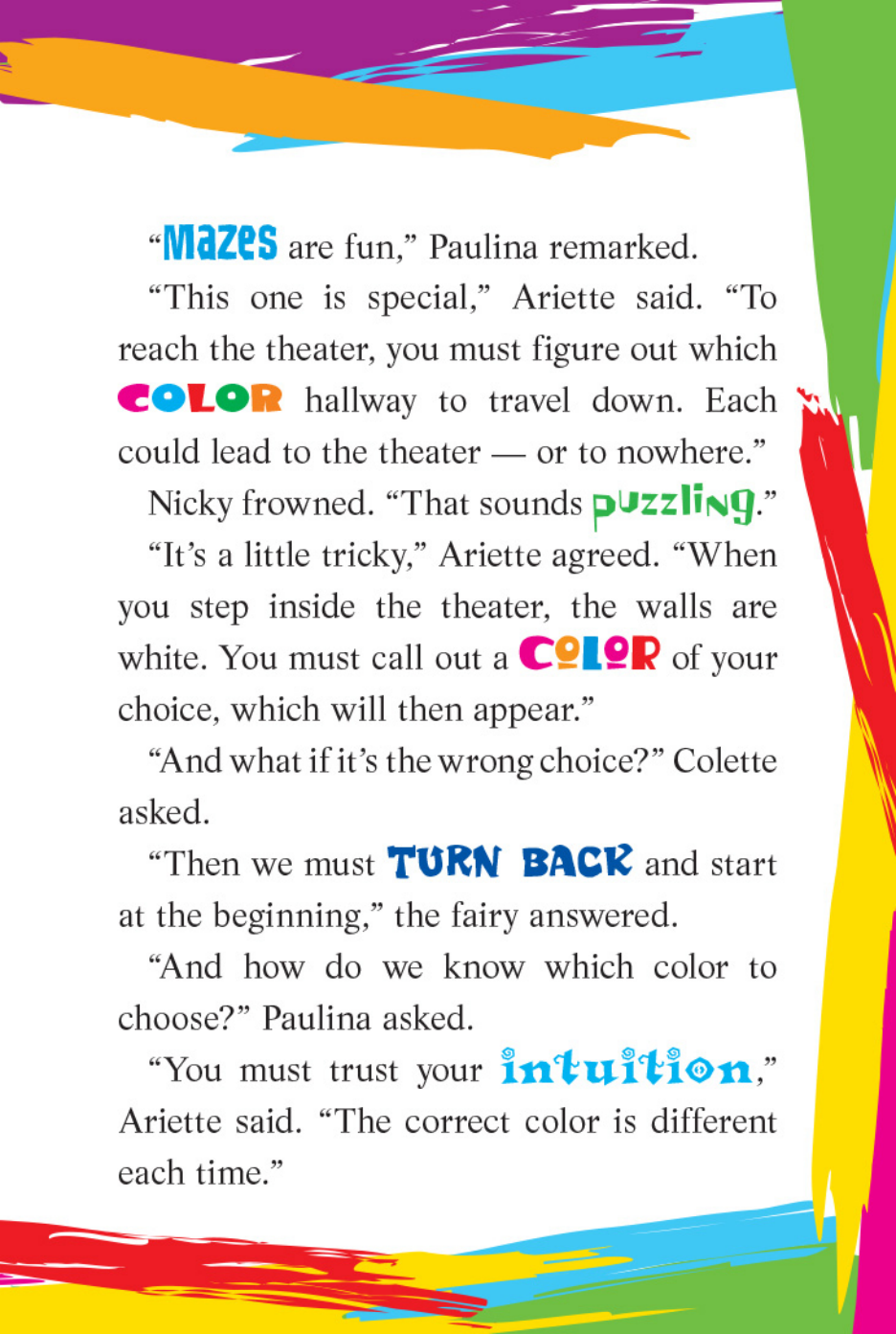
“The Color Pixies are very sensitive to the **smell** of color,” Ariette explained. “Each color has its own smell, and it makes their noses **itch** and wakes them up.”

“Then we cannot **ALERT** the Rainbow Moths. But you said that they have very good hearing. How will we sneak past them?” Colette asked.

“We won’t,” Ariette admitted. “The **Rainbow Moths** will see us at the village borders. As soon as we enter the village, we’ll just have to **hurry** and get the crystal.”

Paulina nodded. “Where is it exactly?”

“It’s kept in the **Color Theater**, which holds every shade of color that exists.” Ariette answered. “But to get there we must pass through the **GUESS-THE-COLOR MAZE**.”



“**Mazes** are fun,” Paulina remarked.

“This one is special,” Ariette said. “To reach the theater, you must figure out which **COLOR** hallway to travel down. Each could lead to the theater — or to nowhere.”

Nicky frowned. “That sounds **puzzling**.”

“It’s a little tricky,” Ariette agreed. “When you step inside the theater, the walls are white. You must call out a **COLOR** of your choice, which will then appear.”

“And what if it’s the wrong choice?” Colette asked.

“Then we must **TURN BACK** and start at the beginning,” the fairy answered.

“And how do we know which color to choose?” Paulina asked.

“You must trust your **intuition**,” Ariette said. “The correct color is different each time.”



How wonderful!

Ooh!



Here's the maze!



With the plan in place, Ariette and the others **flew** into the village. As soon as they crossed the border, the Rainbow Moths flew toward them, leaving **color streaks** in the sky as they went.

“What an amazing sight!” Paulina exclaimed.

“We could enjoy it more if we weren’t in **DANGER**,” Will said.

They landed in front of the **GUESS-THE-COLOR MAZE**. A rainbow arched over the entrance.

“It’s too bad Violet isn’t here,” Colette said, thinking of her **ARTISTIC** friend. “She would love this!”

“We’ll tell her all about it,” Will promised.

As they climbed off their **unicorns**,





they saw that the sky above them was marbled with **COLOR**. They heard a great **beating** of wings as they entered the maze.

“The Color Pixies are awake!” cried Colette.





INSIDE THE MAZE

“Let’s try to hurry!” Ariette said.

Will looked thoughtfully at the maze.

“What’s your **FAVORITE COLOR**?” he asked the others.

Orange!



“Mine is **Pink**!” Colette replied immediately.

“I like **green**, the color of nature,” Nicky replied.

“I like **orange**,” said Paulina.

“It’s so bright and happy.”

Ariette smiled. “I like

silver, the color of the clouds.”

“And I like **blue**,” added Will.

“We can only choose

Silver!





one color to start,” the fairy reminded them.

“Then I’ll try!” Colette said. “Pink is *my color*. It won’t let me down.”

She took a step forward. “**PiNK!**” she cried.

The floor and the walls of the maze immediately turned Colette’s *favorite* shade of bright pink.





“**WOW! AMAZING!**” she exclaimed. “I need to paint the walls of my room this color.”

The others followed, trusting in her. They walked down a short hallway, which turned to the right. They walked down another hallway, and turned to the left.

“Are we **turning** in circles?” Colette wondered.

“Let’s go a little farther,” suggested Ariette.

The halls of the maze kept **twisting** and **turning** as they walked.

Finally, Nicky called out, “I see the **theater**! Colette chose the right color!”

“I knew that **pink** would stay true for me,” Colette said with a grin.

“I think the reason you **succeeded** is that you were so certain,” Will said.

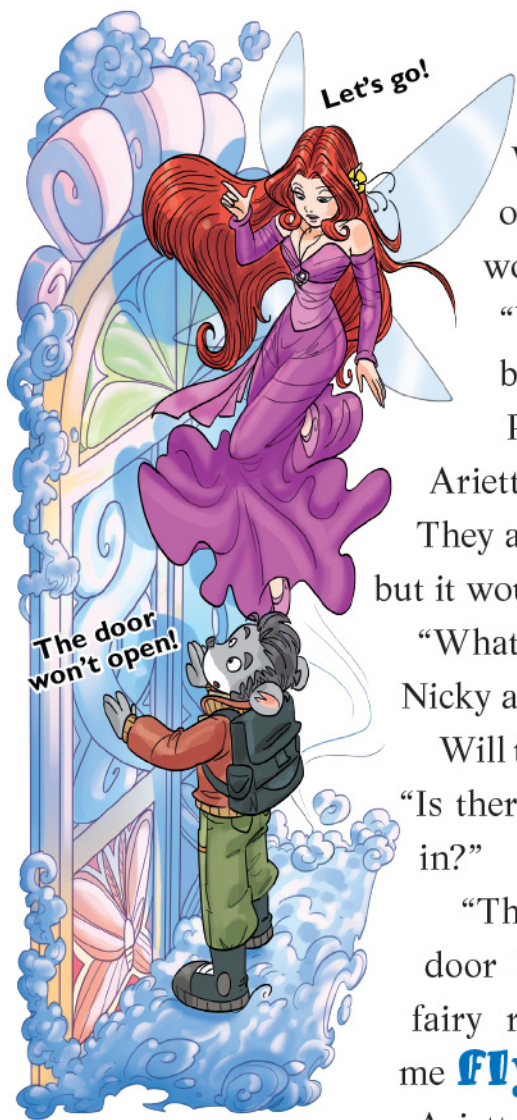
Tall columns marked the theater entrance, and another **rainbow** arched overhead.



There it is!

The theater!

We did it!



Will **PUSHED** on the door, but it wouldn't budge.

"We must **hurry**, before the Color Pixies find us,"

Ariette said anxiously. They all tried the door, but it would not open.

"What do we do now?" Nicky asked.

Will turned to Ariette. "Is there **ANOTHER** way in?"

"This is the only door I know of," the fairy replied. "But let me **fly** and check."

Ariette flew off and



returned **quickly**, out of breath.

“I think I found something!” she said.

She led them around to the back of the theater. There was no door — only a group of **NUMBERS** painted on the wall.

“What could that be?” Colette wondered.

“I think it’s a kind of puzzle,” said Paulina, stepping up to closely examine the numbers.

“It’s **connect the dots!**”

She placed her paw on the number **1** and **TRACED** a line between that and number **2**. Immediately, the imaginary line turned **Pink**.

“Keep going!” Nicky urged.

Colette glanced over her shoulder. “Are the **Color Pixies** close?” she asked.

“They must be,” said Will, worried. “The moths would have **awakened** them all by now.”



“But they must still pass through the **maze**,” Ariette reminded him. “So we have a bit of a head start.”

Will nodded. “That’s good news.”

As they talked, Paulina worked as ***FAST*** as she could to connect the numbers.

“It’s taking shape,” Nicky commented.

“Hurry, Paulina!” Colette urged.

They heard a **flutter** of wings overhead and looked up. The Rainbow Moths had made it through the maze!

“The Color Pixies can’t be far behind,” Ariette said.

Just then, Paulina **CONNECTED** the number 99 to 100.

“Done!” she announced with satisfaction.

Everyone admired the finished picture: it was the image of a **beautiful fairy**!

Then they heard **creaking** hinges.



“There must be a **hidden door** in the wall, and solving the puzzle has opened it!” Will realized.

The door swung open.

“Quickly now!” Ariette said, and they all hurried inside the **Color Theater**.





THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP

Once through the door, they found themselves in a room full of marvelous **COLORED LIGHT**. The walls, made of clouds, **constantly** changed color.

“They remind me of **THEATER LIGHTS**,” Paulina said, remembering the school plays at Mouseford Academy.

“It reminds me of a **multicolored** forest,” said Nicky, looking around in awe.

Even Ariette seemed **amazed**. “I have never been inside here before,” she said. “Others have described it to me, but words do not do it justice.”

Will gazed around. There was so much to take in!



Where is the crystal?

Come with me!



“Do you know where we can find the **CRYSTAL**?” he asked.

“It is kept in the **ROOM OF LIGHT**,” the fairy replied. “The pixies keep their most **precious** objects there. It is said to be the only room with a golden door. It should be easy to find.”

And it was. They quickly located the **GOLDEN DOOR**, which was not **LOCKED**. When they opened it, they gasped in **surprise** as a flash of **white light** blinded them for a moment.





When their eyes adjusted, they saw the light **REFLECTING** over every surface.

“A **crystal room**! How gorgeous!” exclaimed Colette.

Looking around in wonder, they stepped inside. Ariette’s crystal **glittered** on top of a **pedestal of clouds** in the center of the room. When she saw it, the fairy’s eyes filled with tears.

Colette put a paw on her shoulder. “It must be **wonderful** to see it again.”

Ariette nodded. “I just hope it is not too late and I still have my **powers**.”

She reached out to take the crystal — and something blocked her hand.

“There is some sort of **invisible barrier** protecting the crystal,” Ariette said.





Nicky **tapped** on it. “Should we try to break it?” she asked.

Will tapped on it, too. “It feels very hard, almost like **GLASS**,” he said.

He pulled a **small hammer** out of his backpack and hit the barrier with it a few times, but it didn’t **BREAK**.

“No luck,” Will said with a frown.

“We have come all this way, and now we must **give up**,” Ariette said sadly.

“We are **NOT** going to give up,” Colette said firmly. “There must be some way to get past this invisible barrier.”

She placed both paws on the barrier’s **TRANSPARENT SURFACE**.

“Yes, there must be a way!” added Paulina, placing her paws next to Colette’s.

Nicky walked up and joined her friends. Nothing happened for a few seconds, and

It's an invisible
barrier!

What do we do?





then a **SHINING FLASH** burst from the crystal as if it were lit from within. A bright glow filled the room.

A moment later, the transparent dome **DISSOLVED**. Ariette took the crystal and stared at it in disbelief.

"I don't understand," said Nicky.

"We didn't do anything," added Paulina.

Ariette smiled at them. "You're wrong. You have done much, and my **CRYSTAL** knew that."

"What do you mean?" asked Colette.

"The **heart** on my pendant is sensitive to the strongest, purest feelings, like the friendship between you three," the fairy explained. "When it sensed your friendship, it responded with a burst of **pure light**."

Paulina looked surprised. "Then our **friendship** dissolved the **BARRIER**



protecting the crystal?”

“I believe so,” replied Ariette. “It’s clear that you love one another and **take care** of one another. And you transmitted all that to the crystal through your paws.”

Colette, Nicky, and Paulina looked at one another and then all **hugged** tightly.

“FRIENDSHIP SAVES THE DAY!”

they cheered happily.

“It’s wonderful,” said Ariette, thinking of her own dear friend as she looked down at Galatea’s **CRYSTAL**, which still hung around her neck.

She slipped off Galatea’s pendant and put it safely in her pocket. Then she put on her own crystal. Suddenly, her eyes became **bright**, her cheeks turned **Pink**, and her hair shone like **silk**.



"I feel so much better,"
said Ariette.

"Do you still have
your **powers**?"
Paulina asked.

Ariette nodded.
"I can feel them.
But now I am
worried about
Galatea.
We must return
her **CRYSTAL**
to her right away."

"But what about the
Color Pixies? Won't they stop us?" Colette
asked.

Ariette's eyes shone. "I have an **idea**.
Follow me!"





ALL ABOARD!

As soon as they left the Color Theater, Ariette said, “I am a **Weaver Fairy**. Now I will weave something to let us leave this place.”

Surprised, Will, Colette, Nicky, and Paulina watched as Ariette took an object from her pocket that looked almost like a **KNITTING NEEDLE**. Then she removed her shawl and unraveled the **silver threads** it was made from. She used the needle to weave a large fluffy cloud.

Ariette wove and wove without stopping, and the **shining thread** seemed like it might go on forever. But it did run out, and then Ariette began to shape the finished cloud with her hands. She made it into a



large **hot-air balloon!**

Finally she nodded to her new friends.
“Everyone on board, quickly!”

Ariette flew alongside the **balloon** as the others climbed inside. Then she pushed it toward the wind, and the **CURRENTS** began carrying it away.

“**We’re flying!**” Nicky exclaimed.

“But look down there!” Paulina cried.

The Color Pixies had caught up to them at last, along with the **MAGIC UNICORNS**.

“Unfortunately, there’s not much **wind**,” Ariette said. “If we keep going at this pace, they’ll catch us. But I have another **idea**. They don’t really want you — they want **me** and my crystal. I will lead them in another direction while you get back to Galatea.”

“But they’ll **catch you!**” Colette cried.

Ariette shook her head. “I am **FASTER**



This is great!

All aboard!



than the Color Pixies, and the magic unicorns are easily fooled. If I hide behind a cloud they will not find me.”

Will nodded. “Good plan. **Be careful.**”

“There’s a strong air current above us that





will take you to the **Cloud Castle**,” Ariette said. “I’ll give you a push up there.”

“Okay,” said Will. “**Good luck!**”

With that, Ariette **flapped** her wings and gave them a **PUSH**. Will steered the balloon into the **air currents** as Ariette flew off, waving good-bye.





QUEEN NEPHELE'S STORY

Back at the Cloud Castle, **NIGHT** had fallen.

"The fairies will all go to **sleep** now," Galatea whispered. "They retire early in hopes of having **good dreams**. Even if they aren't dreaming anymore."

You should rest . . .



"You look **PALE**," Violet noticed. "Are you feeling okay?"

"I'm a bit **tired** because I'm not wearing my crystal," Galatea admitted.

"Maybe you should rest," Violet suggested.

"No, I'll be fine,"



Galatea said. “Thank you. But I am worried about the rest of you. If **Queen Nephele** realizes that your friends have left the castle, there will be trouble.”

“I think the fact that we stayed behind should **confuse** everyone, at least for a little while,” I said. “And I am sure they will be here with Ariette soon. Then we can help them **safely** get to the quarters of the Weaver Fairies to figure out what is happening.”

Galatea nodded. “Ariette should have the **Dream Key** with her. Unless . . . of course! When she was imprisoned, they would have taken the key from her.”

“**What is the dream key?**” I asked.

“It opens the doors to the wing of the castle where the Weaver Fairies sleep,” Galatea answered.



“Is there any other way to get a key to the Weaver Fairies’ wing?” Pam asked.

Galatea nodded. “The queen keeps an extra key to each wing in her treasure chest inside a **secret room** in the Royal Wing.”

“Can you take us there?” I asked.

“It won’t be easy,” Galatea said. “There is a hidden passageway that leads to the Treasure Room, but it’s very **difficult** to find. And the chest is guarded by the **crystal eagles**.”

Violet shivered. “They sound **beautiful** but **SCARY**.”

“They are both of those things,” said Galatea. “They are **TRANSPARENT** creatures, capable of hiding anywhere.”

“What do they do to intruders?” Pam asked.

“If you try to get past them, they will appear out of nowhere,” Galatea said.



“Anyone who looks into their **icy eyes** will suffer a terrible fate. The eagles will steal their dreams so that they **stop dreaming** forever!”

Violet shivered. “That sounds **AWFUL!**”

Pam looked at me. “Should we try to get the key?”

“I think we must,” I replied. “Without it, Ariette cannot get to the Weaver Fairies. But we must be very **careful.**”

“Yes, the Crystal Eagles must be taken **SERIOUSLY,**” Galatea said. “There is a legend about them, but I’ll tell you on the way. We must hurry.”

She led us down a **long hallway** full of windows facing the palace courtyard. It was dark outside, but the palace was shining, illuminated by **brilliant crystals.**

Galatea began the story in a low voice:



“Long ago, when Queen Nephele was just a **baby**, her parents were abducted by an **EVIL** wizard. The princess was so sad that she cried for days and days. From her tears were





born two **TRANSPARENT** Crystal Eagles.
From then on, these **MAJESTIC** birds have
watched over her and are always ready to
protect her with their powers.”





“What a **sad story**,” said Violet.

“But it’s also full of hope,” I said. “At least something was born from her sadness.”

“Maybe, but it would be better if the queen’s **parents** could return one day,” Violet said.

Galatea nodded. “Yes, Violet. We fairies **hope** for that each day, but unfortunately, nobody knows what happened to them.”

“Maybe that’s the reason the queen has such a **stern personality**,” Pam guessed.

I thought Pam was right. “Often, a hard shell hides the sadness of a **tender heart**,” I said.

Meanwhile, we had reached the end of the hallway. In front of us was a **LONG STAIRCASE** that led to the rooms of the fairies of the Grand Council. One floor above them were the queen’s quarters.



THE TREASURE ROOM

“The **Cloud Castle** is filled with beautiful and interesting places,” I remarked as we climbed up the staircase.

We reached a landing, and Galatea led us through a door at the top. It revealed a hallway lined with **silver doors** decorated with crystals.

“Those are the rooms of the fairies of the **Grand Council**,” she explained.

“It almost looks like the **dormitory** at Mouseford!” Pam remarked.

“With a lot more **BLING**,” Violet said, touching the door.

“The **hidden passageway** is on this floor, but we must pass through here **quietly**,”



Galatea whispered. “The fairies should all be asleep, but if anyone **wakes** and finds us here, there will be trouble.”

We tiptoed down the hallway and turned down another one. The walls of this hall were made of **purple clouds** with white patterns on them. Crystal sconces **LIT UP** the walls.

“The door to the passageway is here, but it is **invisible**,” Galatea told us. “If I had my crystal, I could find it more easily. But without it, I am not sure where to **LOOK**.”

“So now what do we do?” asked Pam.

“We must carefully feel the wall,” Galatea answered. “The door is invisible, but we should still be able to find the **doorknob**.”

It was a long hallway, so we quickly got to work, running our paws over every surface of the **cloud walls**.



“Cheese and crackers, I just can’t find it!” Pam said after we had been looking for a few minutes.

“I can’t find anything, either,” Violet said.
Galatea put a warning finger to her lips.





“Shhh. We must not **wake anyone.**”

“*Sorry,*” whispered the mouselets.

We quietly continued our search.

I *carefully* moved my paws up and down the walls. The doorknob had to be there somewhere! Then, at last, I felt something solid and **ROUND** beneath my paw.

A passageway!





It was smooth and cold.

I grasped it and turned it. Immediately, I heard a **CLACK**, and the invisible door swung open.

Behind me, I heard the others **gasp** in surprise. The wall had opened into a secret passageway!

“YOU DID IT!” cheered Violet.

“With a little patience and a little luck,” I said with a smile.

I gazed through the door. There was a staircase just ahead, leading **UPWARD**.

Galatea grabbed my arm. **“WAIT**, I forgot to tell you something important. After we go through the door to the Treasure Room, we cannot pass through it again. Once we leave, we must exit through the **HALL OF MIRRORS**. It is a twisty corridor of mirrors that can create **DANGEROUS ILLUSIONS**.”



“What do you mean?”
Violet asked.

“Some of the images that
the mirrors **REFLECT**
are not real,” the fairy

explained. “We Cloud
Fairies know which are
the fake images right away,

because we are creatures of the sky, **pure**
and **clear**. But it may not be so easy for
you.”

“Because we come from the **WORLD**
BELOW?” I asked.

Galatea nodded. “Exactly, Thea.”

Violet looked thoughtful. “I was in a house
of mirrors at a **carnival** once,” she
said. “I couldn’t tell which reflection was the
real me, and it **terrified** me!”

“Those who are **afraid** will not make it

*The Hall of Mirrors
is dangerous!*





out of the Hall of Mirrors,” Galatea warned.

Violet took a deep breath. “I will be **STRONG**. I can do it.”

“I know you can, Violet!” Pam said, putting a paw on her shoulder.

“And we will be right there to **help you** through it,” I promised her.

“Well then, are you ready?” Galatea asked.

Pam and Violet looked at me and **nodd**ed firmly.

“Good,” Galatea said. “I’ll go first.”

Then we walked up the stairs and entered the **TREASURE ROOM**.



We did it!

Look!

We found the dream keys!





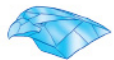
THE CRYSTAL EAGLES

The room that opened up before us was silent and illuminated by large **CRYSTALS** that resembled lanterns. As soon as we crossed the threshold, the door **closed** behind us, as Galatea had said it would.

“There are the **DREAM KEYS!**” Violet said, pointing to four keys hanging inside a case in the center of the room.

“We need the one for the **East Wing**, right?” Pam asked. “The Weaver Fairies’ wing.” She reached for the case.

“**Don’t forget**, the Crystal Eagles may appear out of nowhere,” Galatea reminded them, nervously glancing around. “And when they show themselves, don’t look them in the



EYE, whatever you do.”

I shuddered at the thought of having my dreams **stolen** from me. We had to get out of there quickly.

Suddenly, I heard a **beating** of wings. Then an eagle appeared in front of Galatea.



It looked like a **GLASS SCULPTURE**. It wasn't very big, but its **shimmering** wings sent flashes of light around the room.

Violet took a step toward me. Galatea remained still, lowering her head so she wouldn't look the eagle in the **EYE**.

“Noble eagle, allow us to take one of the dream keys,” said the fairy.

The eagle beat its wings and circled the



room, then stopped again in front of *Galatea*.

“It’s saying **NO**. It doesn’t want to give us the key,” Galatea said.

“Is there anything we can do?” asked Violet.

Suddenly, the second eagle appeared to us, sitting on its **PERCH**. It watched us, but we were careful not to meet its eyes. Even though I wasn’t looking at it, I swore I could feel its gaze **PIERCING** right into me.

“Please, **eagle friends**. Give us the key we are asking for,” said Galatea. “We must save the Land of Clouds.”

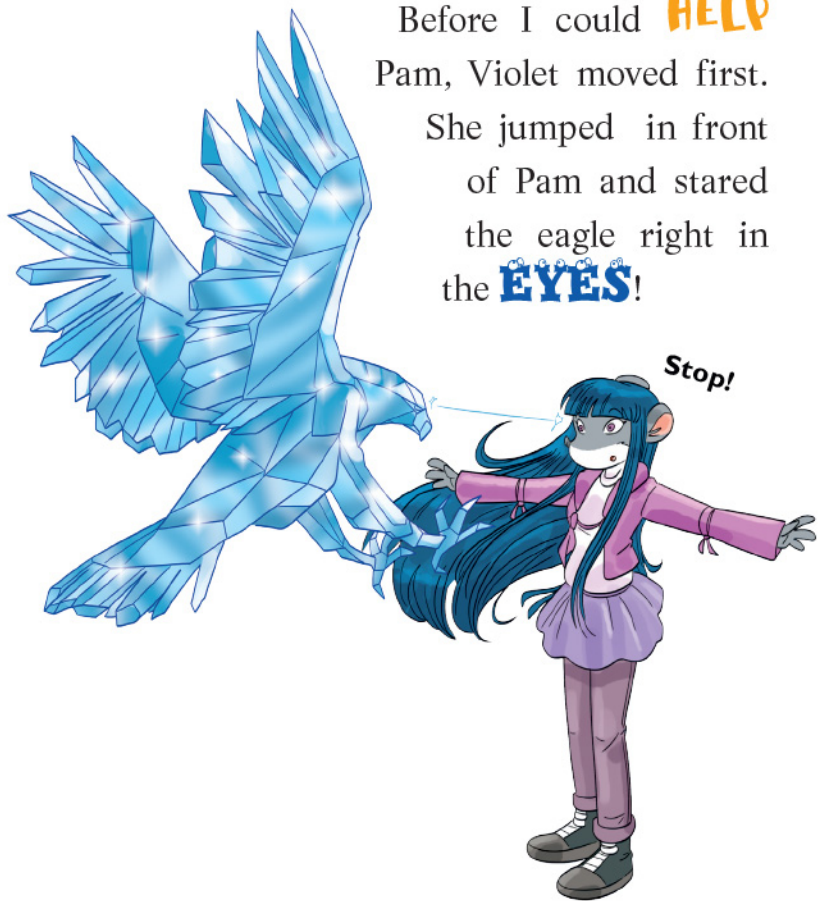
The eagles beat their wings. Then the first *flew* back and joined the other on their perch.

“I’m afraid they won’t change their minds,” Galatea said *sadly*.



Then Pam made a **bold move**. She leaped for the case holding the keys. One of the eagles immediately took flight and swooped down, its **CLAWS** ready to grab her.

Before I could **HELP** Pam, Violet moved first. She jumped in front of Pam and stared the eagle right in the **EYES!**





For a second, all we heard was the **beating** of the eagle's wings. Then the bird returned to its perch, and both eagles **disappeared** from view.

I wasn't sure if Violet's courageous act had **frightened** the creature, or if the eagle had seen something in Violet's eyes — something that told it that we were on a **NOBLE MISSION**.

But Violet had met the eyes of the eagle. What would happen to her now?

Pam **hugged** her. "Violet! How do you feel?"

"I don't know," Violet replied. "My head feels strange. It's as if all my thoughts have been emptied. And I'm a little **dizzy**."

"Sit down a moment," Galatea said.

"Do you think the eagle has **stolen her dreams**?" I asked the fairy.



She nodded solemnly. "I'm afraid so."

"Oh, Violet! Why did you do it?" Pam asked her.

"Because the eagle was going to **ATTACK** you, and I couldn't let that happen," Violet answered.

Pam hugged her again, even more tightly this time. "You are the **best friend in the world!** Holey cheese! You'll get your dreams back, I promise you!"

"Don't worry, I'm okay," Violet said. "Let's get the key."

Galatea opened the case and took out a key with a handle in the shape of a **spirling whirlwind**.



"It's the key to the East Wing," she explained.

"We should leave right away," I said, and then turned to Violet. "Do you think you can keep going?"



“Yes, I can do it, Thea,” Violet said bravely. “Whatever that eagle did to me, it didn’t take my **STRENGTH**.”

“This way,” Galatea said, pointing to a door on the **left**.

“What about that one?” Pam asked, pointing to the door on the **right**.

“That one leads to the queen’s quarters,” the fairy replied.

“I’m surprised she didn’t wake up,” Pam said.

“She must be **dreaming**,” said Galatea. “It’s practically impossible to wake a Cloud Fairy once she’s dreaming.”

Then she looked sad. “Poor Weaver Fairies. I hope they get their **dreams** back soon.”

“They will,” I promised.

Galatea nodded. “But first, we must pass through the **HALL OF MIRRORS**!”



THE HALL OF MIRRORS

Before we entered the Hall of Mirrors, Galatea gave us some advice.

“**LOOK** carefully at each image you see in the mirror, and then ask your heart if it is real,” she said. “That is the only way to get through this.”

“**We’ll try**,” said Pam.

Galatea opened the door and we followed her into a narrow, twisting corridor completely covered in **MIRRORS**. Our reflections were multiplied dozens of times. Even though we had been prepared for this effect, we felt **disoriented**.

“Let’s hold paws,” I suggested, thinking this could help us.



We formed a **line** and proceeded down the hallway.

Galatea went first, followed by Violet, then Pam, and then me.

“Wow, there are a lot of Pams in here!” Pam exclaimed.

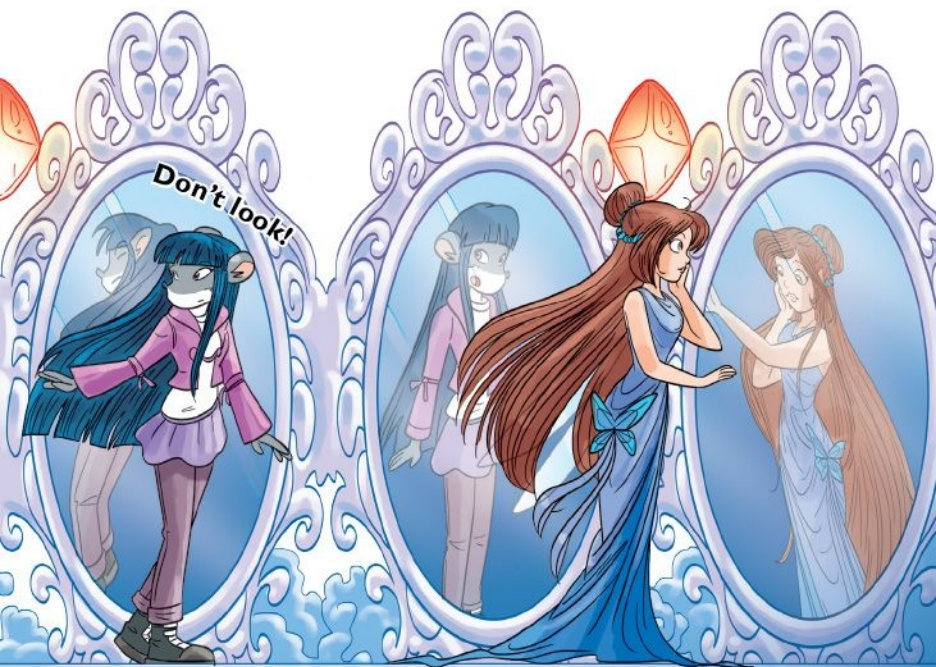
“I see myself everywhere, too,” Violet said.
“And I look so **PALE**.”





“You’re just a little tired,” I said, but I was worried. Before we left the Land of Clouds, we would have to find a way to get Violet’s **dreams** back. “Let’s all try to **stay calm**,” I said.

Galatea looked straight ahead as she led us. She seemed very **FOCUSED** on getting us through there as soon as possible.





“Hey!” Pam cried suddenly.

Violet spun around. “What’s wrong?”

“I **bumped** my nose against my own reflection,” she replied.

Then she sighed. “I wish I had brought a **PIZZA** in here with me. I wouldn’t mind seeing infinite pizzas!”

“How can you joke at a time like this?” asked Violet.

“Thea said to stay calm,” Pam replied. “**JOKING** helps me stay calm. So does thinking about pizza.”

Just then, I saw one of my **REFLECTIONS** staring at me. It looked





like she was **laughing** at me!

I closed my eyes and opened them. This time, the reflection looked **SERIOUS**.

Violet must have had the same thing happen. "Thea, our reflections are **PLAYING** tricks on us!" she said.

"Yeah, my reflection just stuck her tongue out at me!" Pam said.

"Remember, they are only **ILLUSIONS**," Galatea said. "Don't let them upset you."

"Let's stop for a moment," I suggested.

We all stopped and took some **deep breaths**. Feeling calmer, we began walking again.

"How much farther do we have to go?" Pam asked the fairy. "It seems like this corridor will **never end**."

"That's part of the illusion," Galatea told her. "It's really not that far."



Then I saw something that made me **happy**. “Look! A door!”

Full of hope, I ran toward the door — and **bumped** right into it!

“It was just the **REFLECTION** of a door,” Pam said, disappointed.

We looked around and realized there were **EIGHT** doors in front of us!

“Which door is the real door?” Pam asked.





Galatea studied them. “It is **difficult** to tell without my crystal, but I sense it is this second one.”

She approached it — but that was just a mirror, too.

“**SEVEN** is my lucky number. Maybe it’s the seventh one,” Pam said, but she bumped into a reflection as well.

I took another deep breath and tried to concentrate. Galatea had told us to trust our **hearts**. And my heart told me to try door number **FOUR**.

I reached out and touched the door, **hoping** with all my being that I would touch a real doorknob. Then I felt the cold sphere and knew I was right.

“It’s the real door!” I cried.

“**Hooray!**” cheered Pam.

Violet and Galatea smiled with relief. I



turned the knob and the door opened. We were outside the Hall of Mirrors and in a large corridor full of windows.

“Finally!” Pam exclaimed.

Pam rushed to an open window to get a breath of **FRESH AIR**. Then her eyes grew wide.

“Great sticky pistons!” Look at that!” she said, pointing.

We rushed to her side. Through the window, we could see something **flying** down from the sky into the courtyard.

“It looks like a **hot-air balloon**,” I remarked.

“It could be our friends returning!” Galatea said. “Hurry, follow me!”

She **RACED** down the corridor, and we took off after her.



FRIENDS REUNITED

We **hurried** outside and ran through the courtyards, toward the direction of the balloon. We all hoped the same thing: that Will, Nicky, Colette, and Paulina had returned with Ariette and her crystal. But the sight before us was **SURPRISING**.

Our friends were being carried by a hot-air balloon made of **clouds**! We had never seen anything like it. Ariette flew beside them.

“You’re back!” Pam cheered as the balloon and Ariette landed.

The two fairies hugged **tearfully**. 

“I am so **HAPPY** that you are back,” Galatea said. “It must have been **terrible** to



You're back!

Will!

Hooray!



stay alone inside that tower!”

“It was very lonely, but I always knew that somehow I would escape and prove my **innocence**,” Ariette said. “That helped me to get through it.”

“I thought of you every day,” Galatea said.

“Me, too, my friend. And thank you from the bottom of my **heart** for all that you did for me,” Ariette said. Then she took something out of her pocket.

“My **CRYSTAL**!” cried Galatea.

“You saved my life,” Ariette said, placing it around her friend’s neck. Then she turned to the rest of us. “**You all saved my life.** How can I ever repay you?”

“There is no need,” I said. “The greatest reward is to see you **FREE**.”

“And to finish what we came here to do,” Will said. “To save the **Land of Clouds**.”



“Now Ariette can find out why the Weaver Fairies aren’t making any more silver thread,” Pam added.

“That won’t be easy, I’m afraid,” Ariette said. “I must enter the rooms of the Weaver Fairies, but the queen took the **DREAM KEY** from me when I was imprisoned.”

“No problem,” said Galatea. “We have **ANOTHER ONE!**”





Ariette was surprised. “How did you get it?”

“I took it from the queen’s treasure chest,” Galatea replied.

Ariette’s eyes widened. “You went into the **TREASURE ROOM**? Without your crystal?”

“But I wasn’t alone,” Galatea said, looking at Pam, Violet, and me. We smiled.

“We managed to get through the **HALL OF MIRRORS**,” Pam said proudly.

“You must have some story to tell us,” Will said.

I glanced at Violet, noticing again how **PALE** she was. Now wasn’t the time to tell that part of the story, though. First, we had to finish our task here.

“The Weaver Fairies are **sleeping**, so we should go to their rooms right away,” Galatea



urged. “Now is the perfect time to find out what is happening!”

Without another word, we slipped back into the palace again. Galatea and Ariette **guided** us silently through the corridors.

“It’s so quiet,” Colette said. “If the Weaver Fairies have been sleeping **soundly**, does that mean they’re dreaming again?”

“Queen Nephele thinks the fairies might be having **NIGHTMARES** about the World Below, and that’s why they’re not producing **silver thread**,” Ariette replied.

Then we arrived at the door to the East Wing. Ariette put the dream key in the **lock**. The door opened into a long corridor lined with the doors to the fairies’ rooms, all slightly ajar.

“This way,” whispered Ariette.

We **FOLLOWED** her, trying not to



make a **SOUND**.

Oddly, a **silver light** poured from each room. Ariette walked up to the first door. “**I can't believe it!**” she cried, shocked.

We all looked inside and **gasped**.



Look at that!

Ooh!







THE DREAMS OF THE FAIRIES

“It’s **silver thread!**” Colette whispered excitedly. Next to each sleeping fairy’s bed, a soft bundle of silver thread was forming.

“It is!” Ariette said happily. “I knew that the fairies hadn’t stopped **dreaming** because of me.”

Galatea squeezed her hand. “I was sure, too, my friend.”

“But if the fairies are still producing silver thread, then what is the **problem?**” Paulina asked.

“That is what we need to find out,” said Will.

We took a few steps into the room and looked around. The fairies slept **calmly** and

peacefully. The only sound in the room was their light, rhythmic breathing.

Ariette approached one of the sleeping fairies. She closed her **EYES** and concentrated on the fairy's dream.

"What is she dreaming about?" asked Galatea, anxious to know.

"I see endless **BLUE SKIES**," Ariette reported. "She and her roommate are weaving baskets of clouds. And there are **butterflies**! Beautiful butterflies of every color, flying out of the baskets."

"But that's not a nightmare!" said Colette.

Galatea frowned. "And if the fairies are making silver thread, why aren't they **WEAVING** it into clouds in the morning?"

"It is **strange**," said Ariette. "The silver threads are always the first thing we see when we wake up. I did not see any in the



tower, because I cannot make silver threads without my crystal.”

“Let’s check the other rooms,” I suggested.
“Maybe we’ll find a **CLUE**.”

Moving on tiptoe as quietly as possible, we went to the other rooms. We saw the same scene in each one: the fairies slept peacefully as bundles of silver thread grew beside them.

“This is a real mystery,” said Pam.

Ariette suddenly held up her hand. “I thought I heard a noise.”

“Maybe one of the fairies **woke up**,” guessed Colette.

“Or maybe the queen knows we **stole** the dream key,” Pam added worriedly.

Will walked to the door and looked up and down the hallway.

“I don’t see or hear anything,” Will said.



“Let’s keep checking the rooms as *quietly* as we can.”

We nodded in agreement and headed for the next room. Paulina stepped inside first, and we heard her gasp. We looked past her and our jaws dropped with **SURPRISE**.

A beautiful bird with **GOLDEN WINGS** was perched next to the bed of one of the fairies, and it was eating the silver thread!

“It can’t be!” cried Ariette.

The bird heard her and raised its head.





It can't be!



“It’s a **SONGWING!**” said Galatea.

“You recognize this bird?” Will asked.

“It is spoken of in the **ancient legends** of the Land of Clouds,” Ariette replied. “The legends were often told to me when I was little and afraid of the dark. The story goes that the songwing came at night to help children sleep. It guided them toward **good dreams** with its golden wings.”

“So it’s a good creature,” said Pam.

“Yes, of course I’m good!” the songwing piped up in a voice that sounded like the tones of a **flute**.

“Noble songwing, why are you eating our **silver thread**?” Ariette asked him.

“So that my wings can **shine** in the sky, kind fairy,” replied the bird.

“But we need our silver thread to **WEAVE** the clouds,” Galatea said. Without our



clouds, our land will **disappear.**"

"I am sorry, but there is nothing I can do," the songwing said. "Lately the light in my feathers has **dimmed**. I am a mythical creature. I must shine **BRIGHTLY** to help the children!"

"But noble songwing, if you eat all of our silver thread, there will be no more children





to help,” Ariette said sadly. “The Land of Clouds is in great **DANGER!**”

Suddenly, we heard **footsteps** in the corridor.

“It must be the queen!” Ariette said, **alarmed**. “We have been found out!”

And with those words, **Queen Nephele** swept into the room, accompanied by two fairies from the Grand Council.





A GIFT FOR THE SONGWING

“**Ariette!**” exclaimed the queen. “How did you get here?”

Ariette bowed. “I ask your pardon, Your Royal Highness.”

“There is no pardon for **disobeying** me,” the queen said sternly. Then she noticed the rest of us. “What are they doing here?”

“Queen Nephele, please see what we have **discovered**,” Galatea said, stepping aside to reveal the bird with the golden wings.

“**A SONGWING!**” the queen exclaimed in surprise.

“He is responsible for everything, Your Majesty,” Galatea explained. “He eats the silver thread every **NIGHT**.”



The queen was **speechless** for a moment, moving her gaze from the songwing to the bundle of silver on the nightstand.

“The fairies are still **dreaming**,” she said. She turned to Ariette. “And you were **telling the truth**.”

“Yes. I never lied to you,” Ariette replied. “And I saw the dream of a sleeping fairy, and it was **carefree** and **HAPPY**.”

The queen nodded, taking it all in. She put a hand on Ariette’s shoulder.

“I owe you an apology, Ariette. The Grand Council and I inflicted an unjust **punishment** on you. For that I am **truly sorry**.”

Ariette smiled. “The important thing now is that we have solved the problem.”

Queen Nephele turned to the songwing. “You must **LEAVE** this place and stay away from our silver thread.”



“Unfortunately, **I CANNOT**,” the bird replied stubbornly.

The queen’s eyes **darkened**, but Ariette spoke up. “I have a solution.”

She took off her **CRYSTAL** and put it around the songwing’s neck.

“Wear this, and your wings will shine in the sky like **TWO SUNS**,” she said. “You will not need to eat our silver thread.”

“Thank you, kind fairy!” he said.

“Now **fly away**, far from here!” Ariette told him.

The **mythical bird** took off out the open window, wings **SHINING**.

Colette gasped.





“Ariette, what will you do without your crystal? You will **lose** all of your powers — or worse!”

Ariette nodded. “I know,” she said. “But I gave my crystal **freely**.”

“You have such a **big heart**,” Galatea said, her eyes filling with tears.

Queen Nephele looked at Ariette. “That was the crystal that you **stole** from the Color Theater, disobeying my orders.”

Ariette lowered her eyes. “Yes.”

“But you have **proven** your innocence, so I will pardon you,” said the queen. “And not only that, you shall be rewarded for your **generous heart**.”

The queen produced a small turquoise pouch and removed a **PENDANT** from it. She handed it to Ariette.

The fairy looked at it in disbelief. “This is



the **Diamond Crystal**! The **brightest** crystal in the realm.”

“It is,” said Queen Nephele. “And it belongs to the fairy with the **purest**, biggest heart. No fairy deserves this more than you.”

Ariette put on the Diamond Crystal.

“It will be my **TREASURE**. Thank you, my queen,” Ariette said, her eyes shining.

Queen Nephele turned to us. “Thank you, strangers, for all your **HELP**,” she said. “I ask forgiveness for judging you wrongly.”

And then she **smiled** for





the first time since we had met her.

“Your Majesty, there is something you can do for us,” I began, and then I told her what had happened to **Violet**.

“Ariette, may I borrow the **Diamond Crystal** for a moment?” Queen Nephele asked, and Ariette gave it to her.

The queen held the **PENDANT** in front of Violet’s face. Our friend closed her **EYES**. Then she opened them and smiled at us.

“I feel like myself again,” Violet said.

“All is well,” the queen reassured us, and she handed the pendant back to Ariette.

“**Thank you from the bottom of my heart,**” I told the queen.

“We must celebrate!” the queen said. “Please stay and be our guests of honor in the **Hall of Stars!**”



THE GRAND CLOUD BALL

Inside the Cloud Castle, the Weaver Fairies made **STAR** decorations for the ceiling. They strung garlands of clouds made of **glittering** silver threads. As we admired their amazing skill, Ariette approached us.

“Do you like them?” she asked, pointing to the decorations.

“They’re wonderful!” Colette replied. “Can you **imagine** if we had decorations like these at Mouseford Academy?”

“I’ve never seen anything like them,” Will agreed.

“All the **fairy creatures** of the Land of Clouds and the neighboring realms will join the party,” Ariette explained. “Now come



with me. I want to show you something.”

We followed her through the **corridors** of the castle until we reached the **LIBRARY**. On a large table in the middle of the room was a stack of shiny envelopes. Inside each was a lovely **pink card**.

“What elegant invitations!” Violet said.





“Would you help me **deliver them?**”
Ariette asked us.

“**OF COURSE** we’ll help!” we replied.

We followed her to the stables, where we found the flying **UNICORNS**. Then Ariette handed us **silver thread**.

“Hang the envelopes around the necks of





the unicorns,” the fairy instructed. “They will **deliver** them.”

As soon as every invitation was attached, the fairy gave a **signal** and the unicorns flew off. They were truly amazing, their glossy coats **gleaming** in the sun.

Galatea joined us. “The **party** begins soon,” she informed us. “Queen Nephele asked me to take you to the fairies’ wardrobe, where you can choose the **dresses** you would like to wear.”

“Did you say *fairies’ wardrobe*?” Colette repeated in disbelief. Then she looked at us with a twinkle in her eye. “**WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET’S GO GET READY!**”

The Thea Sisters burst into **HAPPY LAUGHTER**, and we hurried after Galatea. →

“Let’s not take too long,” I said, thinking of Colette’s usual behavior back at the



academy. “We’re the **guests of honor**. We can’t be late!”

After we changed into our beautiful **GDWNS**, we entered the Hall of Stars. It looked magnificent! And each fairy wore a **gorgeous** dress in the color of a **glowing jewel**.



Ariette pointed to a group of princes across the room. “Those

are the **Princes of Nimbus**,

descendants of the ancient sky family,” she explained.

“They are known for their nobility



of **SPiRiT** and courage.”

Then one of the princes broke off from the group and made his way to the queen.

“That’s actually the King of Nimbus,” Ariette said. “His name is **Nebus**.”

Everyone bowed as he walked by. Then he greeted the queen with an **elegant** bow.

She gave him her hand and he led her to the center of the room, where the two began to **dance** with grace and elegance.

“They look made for each other,” Nicky remarked.

“And they seem to be **in love**,” said Violet with a smile.

Then the Princes of Nimbus approached our little group. Some **invited** the Thea Sisters to dance, while some stopped to talk to me and Will about their travels in **faraway places**.



How exciting!



You dance beautifully!



ALL THE COLORS OF THE CLOUDS

The **party** in the Hall of Stars was truly unforgettable. But when it ended, it was time for us to return **home**.

We all changed back into our regular clothes and got ready to leave.

“What a shame that we must leave the **Land of Clouds** so soon,” said Violet when it was time to say good-bye.

“I will be sorry to see you go,” said Ariette. “There are still so many things for you to **discover** here.”

“We will never forget you,” I said.

“Perhaps this will help you remember,” a **Color Pixie** piped up. They had become friendly to us again after we were pardoned



by the queen.

The pixie handed a box to Violet. She opened it to see **pots of paint** in every color.

“You can bring some of the **colors** of our world to the World Below,” said Ariette.

“**What a fantastic gift! Thank you!**” said Violet.

“It’s the least we can do to say thank you,” said Queen Nephele.

“Thank you, Your Highness,” said Will with a bow. “We must ask you for one last favor. We need to reach the **secret passage** to return home from the Land of Clouds. Can you show us the way?”

“**We’ll do it!**” the Color Pixies offered.

So you won't forget us!





Ariette and Galatea hugged us **good-bye**, and we bade our farewells. Then we climbed aboard some **fluffy** lilac clouds.

The Color Pixies led us to the silver gates where we had entered the **Land of Clouds**.





“We must leave you here,” the pixies said.
“Good luck!”

We waved to them and climbed off our **clouds**. We walked along a footpath of clouds until a **light fog** rose up around us.

We held paws and continued along the path. We weren't worried, though. By now

It's marvelous!

*Look! There's
the gate!*





we were used to the feel of the **clouds** under our feet.

After a few minutes, the fog lifted.

"It's snowing!" Nicky cried.

"And look . . . we're wearing our mountain-climbing gear again," Colette said, looking down at her **boots**. "How can that be?"

Will searched the horizon for a landmark. "Those lights over there look like they could belong to our **helicopter**."

"Does that mean we're at base camp in Mount Everest, back in the **real world**?" Paulina asked.

Will smiled. "Journeys to **fantasy worlds** are always full of surprises!"

I nodded in agreement. And this time, the surprise was a good one. Our return to the real world had been so simple and sweet, like **waking up** from a wonderful dream!



ONE LAST SURPRISE

We were silent on the ride back to the **SEVEN ROSES UNIT**. Each of us was thinking about the **EXTRAORDINARY** adventure we had just experienced.

After the helicopter landed, Will turned to us.

“Once again, we have succeeded in returning **peace** to one of the **fantasy worlds**,” he said. “Thanks to all of you.”

“It was a demanding

*See you on our
next adventure!*





mission, but we are always happy to help,” I said.

“I could not have completed this **MISSION** without every one of you,” Will said. “I’m sure the Seven Roses Unit will call on you again soon.”

We said **good-bye** to Will and boarded the copter again for our return to Mouseford Academy. When we finally arrived, we were **happy** and excited, but also very **tired**.

I headed to my office to begin jotting down notes about the journey so I wouldn’t forget. A few hours later, Colette and Pam **KNOCKED** on my door.

“Thea, could you please come to our room for a moment?” Colette asked. “We’d like to show you something.”

“Sure,” I said, feeling **curious**. “What’s this about?”



Surprise!

Look at all the colors!

Wow!



“We can’t tell you. It’s a **SURPRISE**,” Pam replied.

When I got to Colette and Pam’s room, the surprise hit me with a **blast of color**.

The Thea Sisters had used the **pixie colors** to paint clouds all over the walls! I knew that those beautiful colors would always remind us of our journey through the **Land of Clouds**.

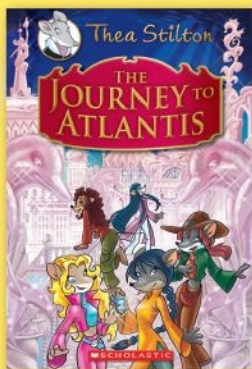
“This adventure was so amazing,” said Paulina. “I can’t even imagine what our next one will be.”

Nicky smiled. “Well, I know that whatever happens . . .

**OUR FRIENDSHIP WILL
LEAD US TO SUCCEED!”**



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of my fabumouse
special editions!***



**THE JOURNEY
TO ATLANTIS**



**THE SECRET OF
THE FAIRIES**



**THE SECRET OF
THE SNOW**



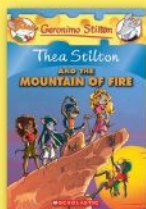
**THE CLOUD
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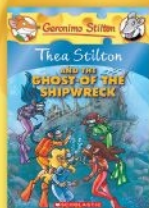
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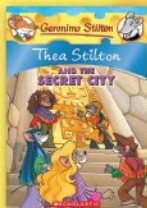
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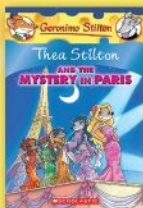
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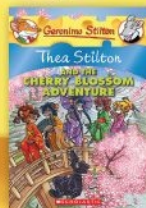
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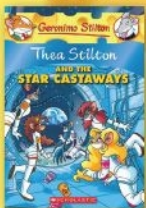
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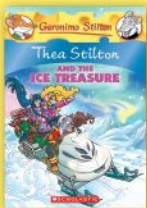
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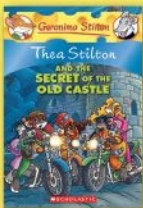
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**Thea Stilton: Big Trouble
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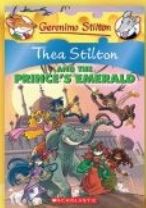
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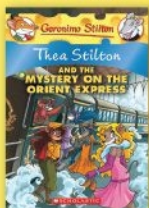
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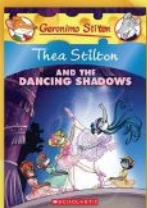
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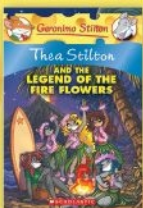
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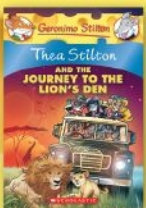
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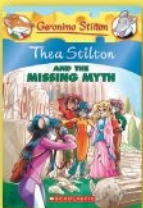
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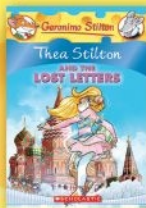
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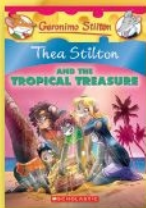
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**Thea Stilton and the
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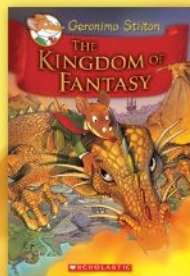
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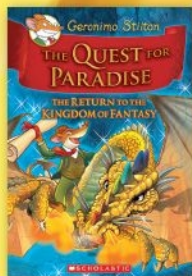
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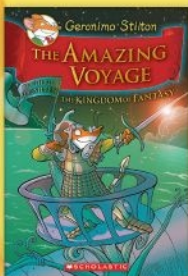
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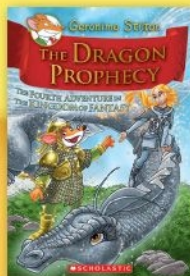
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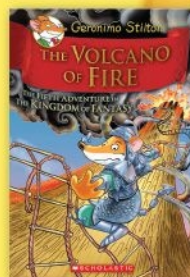
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**THE AMAZING
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**THE DRAGON
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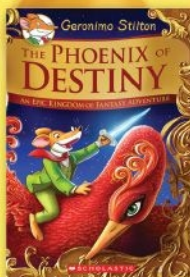
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**THE SEARCH
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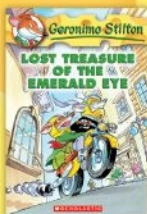
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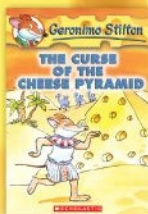
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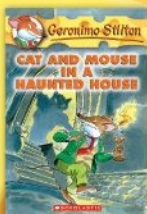
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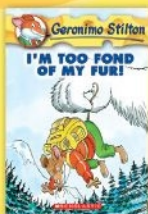
#1 Lost Treasure of the Emerald Eye



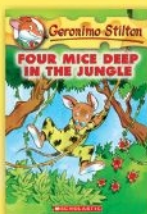
#2 The Curse of the Cheese Pyramid



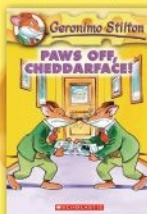
#3 Cat and Mouse in a Haunted House



#4 I'm Too Fond of My Fur!



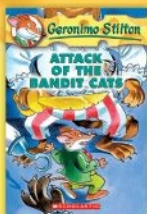
#5 Four Mice Deep in the Jungle



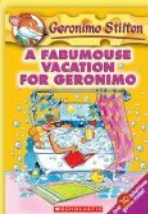
#6 Paws Off, Cheddarface!



#7 Red Pizzas for a Blue Count



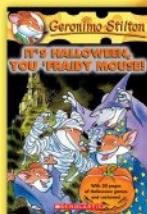
#8 Attack of the Bandit Cats



#9 A Fabumouse Vacation for Geronimo



#10 All Because of a Cup of Coffee



#11 It's Halloween, You 'Fraidy Mouse!



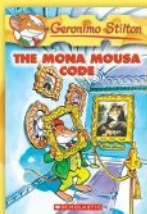
#12 Merry Christmas, Geronimo!



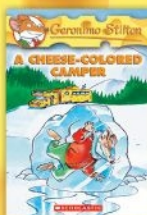
#13 The Phantom of the Subway



#14 The Temple of the Ruby of Fire



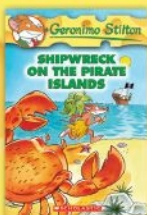
#15 The Mona Mousa Code



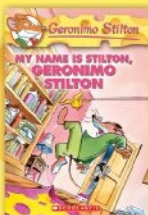
#16 A Cheese-Colored Camper



#17 Watch Your Whiskers, Stilton!



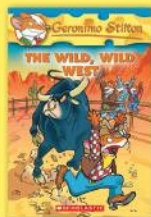
#18 Shipwreck on the Pirate Islands



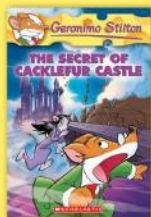
#19 My Name Is Stilton, Geronimo Stilton



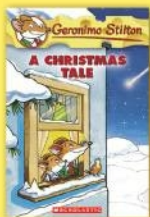
#20 Surf's Up, Geronimo!



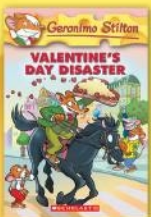
#21 The Wild, Wild West



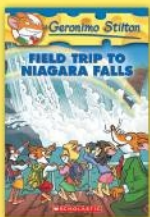
#22 The Secret of Cacklefur Castle



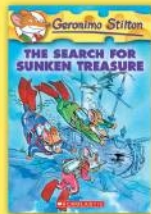
A Christmas Tale



#23 Valentine's Day Disaster



#24 Field Trip to Niagara Falls



#25 The Search for Sunken Treasure



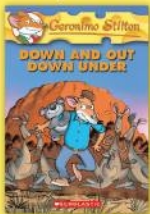
#26 The Mummy with No Name



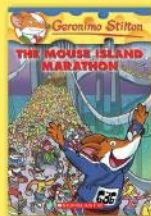
#27 The Christmas Toy Factory



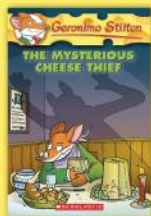
#28 Wedding Crasher



#29 Down and Out Down Under



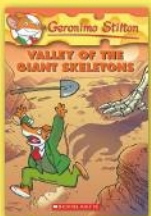
#30 The Mouse Island Marathon



#31 The Mysterious Cheese Thief



Christmas Catastrophe



#32 Valley of the Giant Skeletons



#33 Geronimo and the Gold Medal Mystery



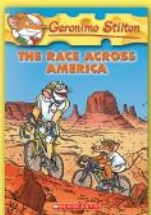
#34 Geronimo Stilton, Secret Agent



#35 A Very Merry Christmas



#36 Geronimo's Valentine



#37 The Race Across America



#38 A Fabmouse School Adventure



#39 Singing Sensation



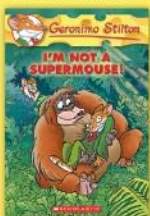
#40 The Karate Mouse



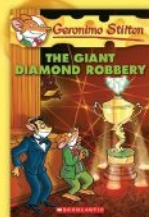
#41 Mighty Mount Kilimanjaro



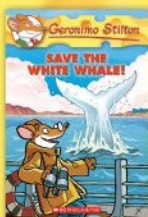
#42 The Peculiar Pumpkin Thief



#43 I'm Not a Supermouse!



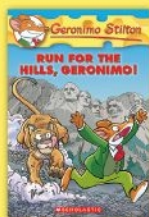
#44 The Giant Diamond Robbery



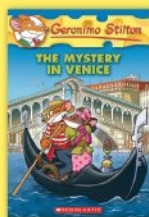
#45 Save the White Whale!



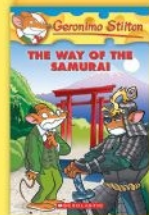
#46 The Haunted Castle



#47 Run for the Hills, Geronimo!



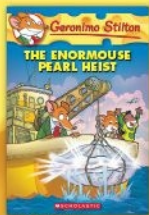
#48 The Mystery in Venice



#49 The Way of the Samurai



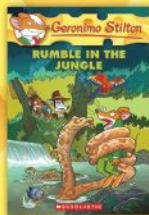
#50 This Hotel Is Haunted!



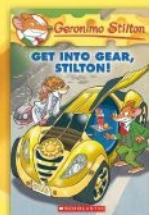
#51 The Enormous Pearl Heist



#52 Mouse in Space!



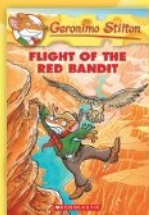
#53 Rumble in the Jungle



#54 Get into Gear, Stilton!



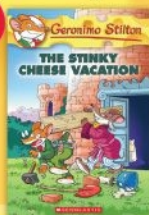
#55 The Golden Statue Plot



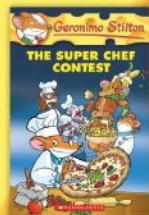
#56 Flight of the Red Bandit



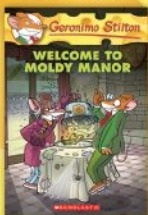
The Hunt for the Golden Book



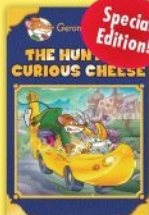
#57 The Stinky Cheese Vacation



#58 The Super Chef Contest



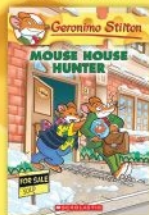
#59 Welcome to Moldy Manor



The Hunt for the Curious Cheese



#60 The Treasure of Easter Island



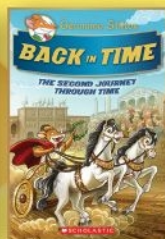
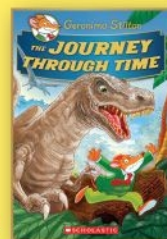
#61 Mouse House Hunter

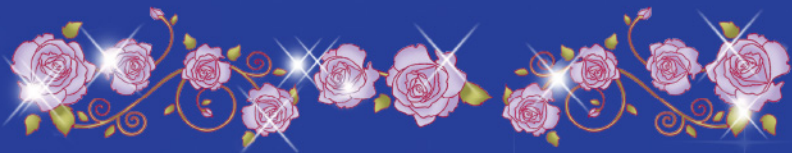


#62 Mouse Overboard!



Don't miss my journeys through time!





What is the secret of the clouds?

The Thea Sisters have received an urgent message from their friend Will Mystery. The magical land of the clouds is in danger — the mouselets must find out why the clouds are disappearing!

Even their path to this kingdom is treacherous, since they can only enter from the top of the world: Mount Everest. Once they're inside, the mice meet fairies, elves, unicorns, and giants. But who can the Thea Sisters count on? It's an incredible journey to restore harmony to this enchanted land!



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